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THE CHILDREN'S
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THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS

Vol. I. GENESIS TO JOSHUA
" II. JUDGES TO JOB
" III. PSALMS TO ISAIAH
" IV. JEREMIAH TO MATTHEW
" V. MARK TO JOHN
" VI. ACTS TO REVELATION

THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY

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"THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS"
AND OTHER WORKS

VOLUME I

GENESIS to JOSHUA

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1920

PREFACE

UNDER the title of "Virginibus Puerisque," three or four sermons to children are published every month in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES. No part of the magazine, except the Introductory Notes, has been more appreciated. A distinguished American scholar wrote to the Editor recently and said: "This winter Mrs. B—— has been reading during our family Sunday afternoon hour, for the benefit of our little girl, the 'Virginibus Puerisque' in different numbers, sometimes getting a bound volume from the College Library for the purpose. Each group of sermonettes has been enthusiastically received. Could you hear the ardent exclamations of the little girl about the stories, you would have no doubt that they are appreciated. They are the best for the purpose of anything we have found and we are grateful to you."

"Virginibus Puerisque" will be continued in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES. But more is required. The preacher, the teacher, the superintendent, the father and the mother—they have all discovered that a new era has opened for the training of children. The short addresses in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES are already being read in some day schools, to give taste to the

Bible lesson, or to send it home to the heart of the little ones. So there must be one for every day. The Sunday-school teacher also must have a good choice: how otherwise can an address be found suitable to the lesson that is taught? And the preacher must have, not sermonettes to read, but materials in plenty to make his own sermonettes interesting and memorable.

Is the preacher afraid that he may become known as a children's preacher? "Then," says Bishop McDowell, "your degradation and humiliation will be complete, especially if you have two or more degrees! But do not worry lest your great abilities should be wasted on children. Only be afraid that your false pride and stupidity may prevent your doing a mighty work among them. The preacher or teacher who can keep or set the feet of childhood in the way of life is doing the largest work being done in the world to-day."

But the mother or the father in the home is most of all in need of such short addresses as this volume and its successors will be found to contain. They are all original. Except in a few cases where they have appeared in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, none of them has ever been preached or published before. They are fresh studies of life in the light of God's word. They are not crude because they are simple; for Principal Davies of Manchester was right when he said that children, "like adults, are susceptible to beauty of thought and language, and it is a mistake to think that 'anything' will do for them. They detect also that which is devoid of ideas and false in argument."

A little argument, however, goes a long way. If children are practical and must ask why, they are also strong idealists. To quote Dr. Barber, formerly Headmaster of The Leys School, Cambridge, "There is no separation between the spiritual and the material; it is as easy for them to believe in angels or God as in winds, sunshine, the postman, or Santa Claus. The tendency to thinking in water-tight compartments, which is possible in limited mature life, is quite undeveloped in children. Imagination is the gift of their Godlike origin; imitativeness is the mark of their imperfectness. The two combined enable them quite easily to see things earthly after the pattern revealed in the Mount."

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THE CHILDREN'S GREAT TEXTS.

IN THE BEGINNING.

In the beginning.—Gen. i. 1.

THESE words are the beginning of the greatest Book in the world. They are the first words of the first verse of the first chapter of the first book of the Bible.

The Jews call the book of Genesis "the Book of the Beginnings" because the first word in the Hebrew Bible is the word which our translators have rendered, "In the beginning." It is a splendid name. Genesis is a book of beginnings. It tells of the beginning of the world, of the beginning of man, of the beginning of the Jewish nation, of the beginning of God's promises.

Now I think that our text is specially a text for boys and girls. You are all "beginnings"—beginnings of men and women. But what kind of men and women you are going to be depends largely on how you begin.

1. So I want to say to you first—*begin well.* A good start means a tremendous lot in a race, and a good start means a tremendous lot in the race of life. Sometimes we are inclined to look upon the years of girlhood or boyhood as a time of waiting. The long, long years stretch out in front of us and it seems as if we *never* would grow up. But they are years of preparation too—the most important of our life. They are the years when we lay up stores of knowledge, stores of goodwill, stores of character. If you lose the opportunity of getting ready then, you will never make it up.

A famous writer tells us that once, when he was a youth, he had a strange dream. He thought that he was an old, old man standing at a window on the last night of the year and looking out into the darkness. He saw a star falling from the sky and he exclaimed in unutterable sorrow, "That is myself!" For he had wasted and misspent his life, and he felt that he was no better than a wandering star that would presently be extinguished in the blackness of night. Then he cried out with a great longing, "Give, oh, give me back my youth!"

At that moment the bells rang out to welcome the New Year and the youth awoke to find it was a dream. He had begun to follow wrong paths, but he was still young. Life with its glorious opportunities still lay before him. He could still make it something noble, something worth living.

And, boys and girls, you have all got that magnificent opportunity — the opportunity to make something splendid of your lives. Don't wait longer to begin. Begin now.

2. And the other thing I want to say to you is—*begin with God.* It follows from the first, for you can never begin well unless you begin with God.

Will you look again at the text and notice the word that follows—"In the beginning—God." Yes, God is at the beginning of every beginning.

There was a famous professor once who was giving a lantern lecture to children about plants and flowers. He explained how the seeds became plants, how the plants became leaves and flowers, how the flowers developed seeds again. Then he went on to tell how all the different parts of a plant were built up of tiny cells, and how all these cells were filled with a wonderful substance called *protoplasm*, a substance which is contained in all living bodies and which makes them live and grow. Finally he said that no one knew what gave to *protoplasm* its power of living and growing. That was a closed door, and behind the door was unfathomable mystery. Then one of the children asked a question—"Please, sir, does God live behind the door?"

And that was the very best answer that could have been given. Behind every closed door, behind every beginning is—God. Behind the tiniest insect, behind the smallest blade of grass is God, and God is love.

God is in the beginning of every beginning, and He wants to be in your beginning too. He made you, He made you for Himself, and you will never reach the full glory of your manhood or womanhood unless you take Him into your life.

Do you want to make your life noble and grand, do you want to make the very best of it? Then take this as your motto—"In the beginning God."

THE PERFECT PATTERN.

God created man in his own image.—Gen. i. 27.

SOME grown-up people have, as you boys and girls know, a way—a rather trying way—of turning you round about and looking you up and down, and then saying, "Let me see, who *are* you like? Why, of course, you are just your father over again!" or "You are your mother's living image!" You don't care for the looking up and down, but secretly you are not a little proud of being told you are like father; for where could you find another man so splendid? And you are really very pleased to know you resemble mother; for her face is the dearest on earth.

But there is Someone else whom you all resemble more or less closely, and that is God. To-day's text tells us that God made man "in his own image." What does that mean? It means that when He made man He made a copy of Himself. It means that God made us—you and me—after the very best pattern that He knew.

God formed the flowers and the fruits, the fishes and the birds, the insects and the beasts, each after its own wonderful pattern, and God saw that they were all very good. But there was something still lacking

What was it? God wanted something finer and nobler than any of these, something nearer Himself, something that could think and understand, something that could share His friendship and return His love. Where could He get a pattern for that? The only worthy pattern for such a being was God Himself. And so, because nothing but the best was good enough, God made man in His own image. Doesn't that make you feel proud and humble at the same time?

Now, if God made us after His own likeness, it means that He intended us to be as like that likeness as possible. He did not want us to be a poor copy. When you are making a copy of anything you try to make the copy as near the original as you can. You keep the model beside you, and you measure it and study it every other moment to make sure that your copy is right. In the same way God meant every man to be a good copy of Himself.

But alas! man was not content to be like God. He preferred to spoil the image which God had created. He began to mar it and deface it, and so to destroy it that sometimes it is only God Himself who can tell where the likeness is to be found; for man has made himself nearer a beast than a man.

But God's image is still there, and it can be restored. Have any of you seen an old house which has been restored? Once upon a time the building had ceilings with wonderful paintings. Or it had walls with beautiful wooden panelling. But somebody who knew no better splashed these exquisite ceilings with colour-wash, and daubed that lovely panelling with green or red paint. All the loveliness was hidden. Then an artist, or a man who knew about such things, came along, and he guessed what was under the colour-wash and the paint. He had them removed, oh! so carefully. He restored to the house its original beauty, and now it is the glory of the neighbourhood.

So God can restore His image in man. How does He do it?

Well, God found that there was one way, only one way, that man could be remade in His image. It was by coming Himself to earth, by showing men the Original. He came to earth two thousand years ago in the person of Jesus Christ. He showed us the Original Pattern, the Perfect Example, and He asks us to copy it.

Can we remake ourselves then? No. We may do a little; but if we want ourselves properly remade we must put ourselves in God's hands. God has shown us the Perfect Pattern to awaken our desire and longing to be like Him, but He knows that we cannot manage the remaking all by ourselves. And so He is ready to help us. We have only to come to Him and say, "Father, I want to be like Jesus. Make me anew in His image."

And if we really mean it God will do it. Day by day, with His help, we shall grow more like Jesus, more like Himself, more worthy to be called "a child of God."

MIST.

There went up a mist from the earth.—Gen. ii. 6.

If you searched the world to find people who really and truly like mist I expect you would discover very few. You would not find many even in Scotland, where, according to English ideas, they specialize in mist. Yes, few of us like mist. It hides the world from us; it makes us feel choky and damp and depressed. We seldom see a boy or a girl dancing and skipping down the road on a misty day as they do on a sunny one. Even the birds and beasts seem less lively.

Did you ever wonder what mist is and how it is formed? Well, mist is just water—tiny drops of water. The sun draws up the moisture from the earth and the sea and the rivers. It draws it up in the form of water-vapour, which is really a transparent gas and so invisible to us. But when the air gets cooler, as at sunset, the water-vapour turns into mist much in the same way as the water-vapour that comes out of a boiling kettle turns into steam when it strikes the cooler air of a room. Sometimes this mist stays above us in the form of clouds, sometimes it comes down to earth.

Now we haven't lived very many years in the world before we find that there are mists in life as well as in nature. There are sunny days when everything seems to go right, and there are misty days when everything seems to go wrong. There are things that are hard to bear or difficult to accomplish, and we don't see the use of them. There are troubles that seem to surround us on every side like a mist. We cannot see through them, and we begin to wonder if there is any way out. I want to speak to you about some of these mists to-day.

1. First there are *the little mists we can rise above.* These are the small frets and worries and annoyances of everyday life. A great deal of time and energy is wasted in turning these slight mists into impenetrable fogs. If you have to learn a difficult lesson, any amount of wishing you hadn't to won't help you. If you have to go to the dentist, well, you just have to, and worrying about it beforehand won't make it any nicer. If you have broken a favourite toy or lost a favourite knife, fretting and regretting won't mend matters. If someone has spoken a cross word to you, that is no reason why you should break your heart. They are most likely suffering from indigestion. Just be nice to them and see what happens.

In the midst of a great political crisis Mr. Gladstone was once asked by a friend, "Don't you find you lie awake at night, thinking how you ought to act, and how you ought to have acted?" And Mr. Gladstone replied, "No, I don't. What would be the use of that?"

If we could just make ourselves think like that, then we could rise above these annoying little mists of everyday life.

A lady once went travelling in Switzerland. She lived mostly in the towns and villages, but one night she slept in a châlet half-way up a mountain. When she wakened in the morning she found herself in a wonderful world. Above was the beautiful blue sky, all round was the morning sunlight, but beneath was a thick carpet of mist. It filled all the valley and shut away entirely the villages below. She felt as if she were in a world of her own, up there with the blue sky and the sunlight and the snow-capped mountains.

And, boys and girls, that is the best way to deal with our small frets and worries. If we can get up into the sunshine, if we can learn to look on the bright side of things, then we shall find that all these little disagreeable mists are in their right place—beneath our feet!

2. And then there are *the mists that make things beautiful*, the bigger mists of real trouble and hardship and difficulty. They don't seem beautiful at the time, these mists, but they leave a rare beauty behind them.

Have you ever looked round you, when the sun came out after a thick mist? The world was turned into a wonderful fairy palace. Each blade of grass carried a diamond, and the spiders' webs sparkled with jewels of many colours. And "Old Man Mist" had done it all with his magic wand.

> When the roses droop and the daisies swoon
> For song of the summer rain,
> His presence comes as a gracious boon
> O'er valley and field and plain;
> Whenever the folds of his tent swing wide,
> At eve or the grey of morn,
> The hills are glad and the mountainside,
> The meadows and fields of corn.
>
> Full softly he comes with stores untold
> And scatters his treasure rare—
> Life for the blooms of crimson and gold,
> And jewels beyond compare;
> But hidden alway from blaze of light
> His wonderful deeds are done,
> Under the cloud and out of the sight
> Of the fervid glow of the sun![1]

And it is the same with the mists of life—they make things beautiful. They grow beautiful characters. It is generally the men and women who have had to fight against the greatest difficulty who have made the biggest and noblest name for themselves in the world; and a good old man once said that the things he could spare least from his life were the things that at the time he found hardest to bear.

[1] B. F. Leggett, "Old Man Mist."

Once two friends were discussing the difficulty they had in growing, in their English gardens, some wild blue gentians that they had brought from Switzerland. The first man told how he had tried over and over again and had always failed. Then the other man related how he also had tried repeatedly to grow the flowers in good positions and had always failed. "But one day," he said, "I planted a root and made a gravel path right over it. And—would you believe it?—it grew and flourished!"

Boys and girls, the fairest flowers of character grow and flourish under difficulty and hardship. So don't lose heart if the big mists of trouble come down upon you. Remember there is beauty beyond the mist.

3. Lastly there are *the thick impenetrable mists which God alone can clear away.*

God hangs a mist between us and the future, but He does it in mercy. If we saw our whole path in life our hearts might fail, but God gives us just one day at a time. The rest He hides in mist.

And God sometimes hangs a mist between us and the things that happen to us here below. We cannot understand many of them now, but some day He will clear away the mist and then all will become plain.

A good old man, one of the Principals of St. Andrews University, lay dying. He was looking out on a Highland loch where lay a thick mist, and this is what he said, "It is very misty now, but it will soon be perfectly clear."

It is often misty now, boys and girls, but it will be perfectly clear in the morning when the sunshine of God's presence will dispel all the mists of earth.

FOUR GARDENS.

And the Lord God planted a garden eastward, in Eden.—Gen. ii. 8.

I WONDER how many of you have gardens of your own—I don't mean your father's and mother's garden, but your very own little plot of ground, which you dig with your very own spade, and water with your very own watering-can, and where you sow your very own seeds bought with your very own pennies. I hope a great many of you have "very own" gardens, because a "very own" garden is a place where you can be very happy.

And there is another thing I wonder. I wonder if any of you have ever counted the gardens mentioned in the Bible. There are four chief ones, and they are all very important.

1. The first one is *the Garden of Eden*—the garden that man lost. I am going to call it the Garden of Disobedience.

When God wished to make the first man happy He put him into a garden, because He knew it was the very best home for him. God surrounded Adam with many good and beautiful things. Never was there a garden where the grass was so green, or the flowers so fair, or the fruits so fine. All day long the birds sang on the leafy trees, and through the midst of the garden flowed a clear and sparkling river.

You remember how Adam and Eve lost their beautiful garden. In the midst of the garden grew a tree called the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." God told Adam and Eve that they might eat of the fruit of every tree in the garden except that one.

Now, perhaps you will imagine that when God had given the man and woman so many good and beautiful things they would wish to obey Him; but just think a little harder. Supposing someone gave you a beautiful palace to live in, and supposing they told you that you might wander about at will in all the rooms except one—a room with a locked door—wouldn't you wish far more to see into that locked room than into all the others? Don't you think that the very fact that it was forbidden would make you wish to get into it? You would imagine all sorts of things about it—that it contained a wonderful secret, that something you very much wished to see or to possess lay hidden in it, that it led into some mysterious passage or cave. Then supposing that one day you found the key of the room, what would you do? I think you would be very much tempted to fit it into the lock, and open the door.

Well, it was just like that with Adam and Eve. They kept thinking and thinking about that tree until they felt they must just have a taste of it. Instead of driving the thought out of their heads they kept on thinking about it, until, when the serpent tempted Eve, she was quite ready to give in to the temptation, and when Eve tempted Adam, *he* was ready to fall.

Don't you think it was a pity that Adam and Eve lost their beautiful garden for such a trifle? Don't you think it was a pity they hadn't been a little firmer and resisted the temptation? But there was something much sadder than the loss of the garden—sin had crept into the world. Adam and Eve had lost something much more precious than the garden—they had lost their innocence and their peace with God.

2. The second garden was *the Garden of Gethsemane*—the Garden of Obedience.

This garden was somewhere on the side of the Mount of Olives. It was quite a small place, but Christ used to love to go there with His disciples for quiet and rest, and it was there He came on the night in which He was betrayed. There He won the victory over temptation and became obedient unto the death of the Cross. There He suffered to undo the harm that had been begun in Eden, to break down the barrier of sin that man had set up between God and himself, and to make a way for all of us to get back to God.

3. The third garden was the garden where Christ was buried—*the Garden of the Resurrection.*

Do you remember how Joseph of Arimathæa came and asked that he might take away the body of Jesus and bury it? And he laid it in a garden, in a new tomb hewn out of a rock.

It was in this garden that, on Easter morning, Christ gained the victory over death. And so by His death and resurrection He won back the gift which Adam and Eve by their disobedience forfeited that day in Eden—the gift of eternal life.

4. The last garden is *the Garden of Paradise*—the Garden which Christ has won back for us.

Fair as the garden of Eden was, this garden is a thousand times fairer, for there sin cannot enter in, nor pain, nor sorrow. You will find a description of it if you turn to the very last chapter of the very last book in the Bible.

Jesus has made it possible for each of us to reach that beautiful garden if we will put our hand in His and let Him lead us there. But until we reach that fair place He has given to each of us a garden to keep and till for Him—the garden of our soul. Some other day I shall tell how we must keep our soul-gardens so that they may be made fit for the beautiful Garden of Paradise.

The Lord God planted a garden
  In the first white days of the world;
And set there an angel warden,
  In a garment of light enfurled.

So near to the peace of Heaven,
  The hawk might nest with the wren;
For there in the cool of the even,
  God walked with the first of men.

And I dream that these garden closes,
  With their shade and their sun-flecked sod,
And their lilies and bowers of roses,
  Were laid by the hand of God.

The kiss of the sun for pardon,
  The song of the birds for mirth—
One is nearer God's heart in a garden
  Than anywhere else on earth.[1]

---

[1] D. F. Gurney.

THE GARDEN OF THE SOUL.

A garden.—Gen. ii. 8.

Do you remember how we heard about the four gardens of the Bible and how we discovered that we have each been given a garden to keep—the garden of the soul? To-day we are going to find out how to keep our soul-gardens.

Now you know there are all sorts of gardens. Some of them look very untidy and neglected; others are neat and well cared for. You can generally tell what kind of people live in a house by looking at their garden. We don't want our soul-gardens to grow untidy and ugly, do we? We want them to grow more and more beautiful. But if they are to be beautiful we must take some trouble with them, because gardens don't take care of themselves.

1. And so I think the first thing we must do is to make sure that they are *well enclosed.*

Why do people build a wall round a garden? To protect it, and to keep out anything that would harm it. Of course we have no wild beasts in this country, but we sometimes hear of rabbits getting into gardens and doing a lot of damage by nibbling the young green things. Once two cows got into a lady's garden by mistake. Somebody had left the gate open, and the cows walked in and trampled on her beautiful flower-beds, and left their hoof-marks on her lawn.

So we must build a wall of defence round our soul-gardens to protect them against the wild beasts of temptation from without. The best defence we can build is the defence of prayer.

2. But, besides being well enclosed, *a garden must be cultivated.*

If gardeners let their plants and trees grow anyhow, if they allow the weeds to flourish, their gardens soon become a wilderness. They must prune the trees so that they bear more fruit; they must tend the delicate plants with care and pull up the weeds.

And so it is with our soul-gardens. We must pull up the weeds of sin and bad habits—the weeds of laziness, and selfishness, and untruthfulness, and ill-temper—else they will soon overrun the place and spoil it. And we must cultivate the good things—the flowers of unselfishness, and kindness, and love.

But don't get discouraged if you don't succeed all in a day. This is work which requires a great deal of patience.

There was once a little girl who went to spend Easter at North Berwick on the east coast of Scotland. She was very fond of climbing North Berwick Law—a hill close to the town. When she went home again she sowed some flower seeds in her garden. But after a week or two she grew tired of waiting for the seeds to come up; so she dug up her garden and built North Berwick Law in the middle of it. She was very sorry when a week or two later her sister's seeds came up, and she had none.

So don't get tired if the flowers in your soul-garden take long to grow. Don't lose patience and dig them up, for they are sure to flourish some day if you tend them carefully.

3. Lastly, *a garden must be well watered.*

Sometimes after a long dry spell in summer you have seen the flowers drooping their heads and looking very weary. What do they need to revive them? A good shower of rain.

And our soul-gardens need rain too, the refreshing rain of God's Spirit. We must ask God to give us His Holy Spirit in order that our gardens may be kept fresh and beautiful, in order that they may be made fit for His fair Garden of Paradise.

THE ONYX STONE.

The onyx stone.—Gen. ii. 12.

How many precious stones do you know? Count and see. I expect all of you know a diamond and a ruby, an emerald and a sapphire, an amethyst and a turquoise. That makes six. How many precious stones do you think the Bible knows? Nineteen! And if we add what we may call "the precious stones of the sea," the pearl and the coral, that makes the list total twenty-one.

You will find most of these precious stones in three great lists. The first list is in the twenty-eighth chapter of the book of Exodus, and it is repeated in the thirty-ninth chapter. That list is a description of the twelve jewels which Aaron, the first Jewish high priest, wore on his breastplate. There were four rows of stones, three in each row, and each stone had the name of a tribe engraved on it. When Aaron went into the Holy Place to intercede with God for the people he put on this wonderful breastplate. He carried, as it were, the names of the tribes on his heart when he entered the presence of God. And as the light of the Holy Place fell on the twelve jewels they flashed and glowed as if they were living.

The second list you will find in the twenty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel; the stones mentioned there are those worn by the King of Tyre. There are nine of them, and you will notice that they are all stones that were mentioned in the first list, though the order is different. Between the time of the first list and the second nine hundred years had passed. Seven hundred years after the second list a third list appeared. You will find it in the twenty-first chapter of Revelation. The stones spoken of there are the twelve foundation-stones of the New Jerusalem, the City of God which is to be, and which John the Apostle saw in a vision. If you read over that list you will notice that eight of the stones we have already met, and four are strangers. The four new stones have names which look hard to spell and difficult to pronounce. Try them. Chalcedony, Sardonyx, Chrysolite, Chrysoprase.

Besides these three lists you will find the names of jewels scattered through many pages of the Bible. You see, the Jews were an Eastern people, and Eastern nations set greater store by gems than we do. You have only to look at the picture of an Indian Prince with his magnificent strings of pearls and his jewelled sword and his turban clasped with an enormous emerald—you have only to look at him to see how much jewels mean to those in the East. An Eastern counts them his most cherished possession. Instead of putting his money in the Bank he buys jewels. He thinks of them as living. He believes that they bring to their wearer health, wealth, happiness, strength, long life, and fame. He fondly hopes that they will keep away from him evil and misfortune. He even imagines that they will wash away sin.

We don't go so far as our Eastern brothers, but still we too love jewels. We admire their wonderful colour and their fascinating sparkle, and we like to hear the many stories that are told of them. Let us see if they have any special message to give to us.

We are not going to take any of the lists we have mentioned, but we are going to make up a list of our own—a stone for each month. Perhaps you may have heard people talking about their birth-stone. They were going back to an idea which the old Romans had that every month of the year had its own precious stone. The Romans said that if you were born in a certain month you should wear the stone belonging to that month. It would bring you good luck. They also wore a talisman made of the stones of the months set in their proper order. Of course we are too sensible to think that merely wearing certain stones will bring us good fortune, but let us see if we cannot make a talisman of our own out of twelve of the Bible stones.

Our stone for January will not be the garnet, which is the stone the Romans chose for it, but the very first precious stone mentioned in the Bible. Look up the second chapter of Genesis. In the last three words of the twelfth verse you will find our text—"the onyx stone."

How many of you know an onyx stone when you see it? And how many of you can tell me why it was called an onyx? Some of the bigger boys and girls who are learning Greek will be able to help here. They will tell us that the onyx stone is named after the finger-nail. There is a whitish half moon at the base of your finger-nail, then there is a broad band of pink, and then there is, or should be, another narrow strip of white. The onyx is a banded stone, and the Greeks thought the markings on it resembled those on the human nail, so they called it the "finger-nail" stone. The best known onyx is formed of layers of black and white, but there are onyxes of other shades besides. Many of them have a layer of red, and these are known as sardonyxes.

You must have seen an onyx many a time though you may not have recognized it. Perhaps Granny has a brooch with a beautiful head carved in white against a black background. You have often looked at it and wondered if the jeweller glued the white carving on to the black foundation. Well, no jeweller ever glued the one to the other, the two are just one stone, and it was God who made them one ages and ages ago. That stone was once a round lump in the hollow of a volcanic rock, and somebody found it and took it to the jeweller, and he cut it, oh so carefully; and then he carved out of the white layer that tiny delicate head; and the result was Granny's brooch which she calls her "cameo." That is the name given to the figure cut on the stone.

Nowadays we do not admire the onyx so tremendously.

Other jewels are more fashionable. But in olden times and in Bible days the onyx was highly prized. It was found in large pieces, so large that even cups have been cut out of a single block. It was tough, yet not too hard, and so lent itself to the engraver's tools. Its coloured layers allowed him to get a striking effect.

I wonder what the onyx stone has to say to us. If it could speak I think it would like to tell us to be sure to get ourselves well engraved. It would say, "Boys and girls, try to be beautiful like me. You are like the lump of stone when it comes from the rock. You can be made into almost anything. It all depends on how you are cut. Are you going to let yourself be spoiled by bad cutting? Are you going to let time and chance have their way and engrave on you images faulty, or distorted, or hideous? Or do you wish to be a beautiful gem, fit for a king's wear? Then go to Christ, the best Engraver, and ask Him to take you in hand. Ask Him to do the cutting and the polishing. Ask Him to take you and make of you what He will."

Shall I tell you the result? Christ will grave on you His own pure image, and He will make of you a gem worthy to be worn in His own crown.[1]

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[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are Job xxviii. 19; Prov. iii. 15; Jer. xvii. 1; Ezek. i. 26, xxvii. 16 (2), xxviii. 13; Matt. xiii. 45; Rev. xxi. 19, xxi. 20 (2).

HOW WE HIDE.

And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God.—Gen. iii. 8.

THERE is a little word of three letters in the eighth verse of the third chapter of Genesis, and though it has only three letters it made me think of no fewer than three sermons for you. Do you think you could pick out that little word? It is the word h-i-d. I want to talk to you for three Sundays about "hiding."

1. What does "hiding" make you think of? I expect you say at once, "Oh! of 'hide and seek.'" Yes, that's a good answer; and "hide and seek" indoors or out-of-doors is a good game. There are so many different ways of playing it too, and they are all exciting. Here is a way I read of the other day.

It was an old, old, old, old lady,
  And a boy who was half-past three;
And the way that they played together
  Was beautiful to see.

She couldn't go running and jumping,
  And the boy no more could he,
For he was a thin little fellow,
  With a thin, little, twisted knee.

They sat in the yellow sunlight,
Out under the maple tree;
And the game that they played I'll tell you,
Just as it was told to me.

It was Hide-and-go-Seek they were playing,
Though you'd never have known it to be—
With an old, old, old, old lady,
And a boy with a twisted knee.

The boy would bend his face down,
On his one little sound right knee;
And he'd guess where she was hiding,
In guesses One, Two, Three!

"You are in the china closet!"
He would cry and laugh with glee—
It wasn't the china closet;
But still he had Two and Three.

"You are in papa's big bedroom,
In the chest with the queer old key!"
And she said: "You are *warm*, and *warmer*;
But you're not quite right," said she.

"It can't be the little cupboard
Where mamma's things used to be—
So it must be the clothes-press, gran'ma!"
And he found her with his Three.

Then she covered her face with her fingers,
Which were wrinkled and white and wee,
And she guessed where the boy was hiding,
With a One and a Two and a Three.

And they never had stirred from their places
Right under the maple tree—
This old, old, old, old lady,
And the boy with the lame little knee.
This dear, dear, dear, old lady,
And the boy who was half-past three.

2. But hiding may remind us of other things besides a merry game. There is another kind of hiding—I wonder if you know it! It is an invisible kind of hiding—which sounds very Irish, but is none the less true.

Suppose you are at school and are feeling very home-sick, and a letter comes from mother or from someone who has been your special friend at home. What do you do with that letter? You take it to your own room and pore over it till you know every word on every page; and then you put it away in the safest place you know, and at intervals you go and read it over again. You hide it in your heart.

And there are some people who do that with the words of the Bible, especially the words spoken by Christ. They hide them in their heart. Just as you, when you are away from home, would say, "I wonder what mother would think of this?" so those people are always saying, "What would Jesus do?"

Boys and girls, it's a fine thing to carry about in your heart the words of those who love you and whom you love. Don't forget to carry about also the words of Him who loves you even better than father or mother or friend. Hide His words safely in your heart.

3. But there is a third kind of hiding, and I'm sorry to say it is an unhappy hiding. It is the hiding of our text. It is the hiding of those who know they have done wrong. Adam and Eve hid themselves from God

because they were afraid to face Him after what they had done. But they were like the tiny child who tries to hide from his mother by spreading out his hands in front of his face. They thought that a few trees could hide them from God's all-seeing eye. But no one can hide from God. God is everywhere.

A little chap of five who was allowed to play on the road in front of his house began to wander farther and farther from home. His mother forbade it, but he persisted. At last one afternoon he was absent two hours, and when he returned his mother shut him into the nursery and told him he must stay there for the rest of the day. Tommy did not at all fancy the four walls of the nursery after the freedom of the streets, and he was very wroth.

By and by his mother went out and Tommy was left in charge of the maid. "Now is my chance!" thought Tommy. So when Mary arrived with his tea, Tommy coaxed, "You'll let me out, won't you, Mary? If you do, I won't tell, and *Mummy will never know*." But Mary refused, and when mother came in and heard the story she had a very serious talk with Tommy, and among other things she told him what Adam and Eve were to find out in the Garden of Eden —that we may hide things from *people*, but *God* always knows.

No, boys and girls, we cannot hide from God, but that need not make us frightened. All the time Adam and Eve were trying to hide, God was really speaking to them though they did not know it. He was talking to them by the small voice of their conscience. He was telling them they had done wrong, but all the time He was longing for them to come to Him to confess their sin and be forgiven. When you feel afraid of God is not the time to fly *from* Him. It is exactly the time to fly *to* Him. Because God loves you so that His heart is ever yearning for you.

But He can do nothing for you till you stop your hiding and go to Him. Remember that, the very next time you have done wrong. Do not try, like foolish Adam and Eve, to hide yourself from God's sight. Take your sin to Him instead, and ask His help to wash its stain away.[1]

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[1] The texts of the other two sermons in this series are Isa. xxxii. 2 and Isa. xlv. 15.

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER.

Am I my brother's keeper?—Gen. iv. 9.

THIS sounds as if it were going to be a boys' sermon, but it is a sermon just as much for girls as for boys, because all the people in the world are our brothers and sisters, and we are all more or less their "keepers."

Of course you know that the words of the text were Cain's reply to God's question—"Where is Abel thy brother?" "What have I to do with my brother?" he meant. "It's none of my business looking after him. How am I to know where he is, or what he is doing?" But all the time Cain knew in his heart that he *was* his brother's keeper, that he was responsible for him. His answer was just a bit of bluff.

I suppose Cain was the first person who made that excuse, but he wasn't by any means the last. Hundreds and thousands and millions of people since his day have been making the same excuse, or some other very like it. Most people are willing to bear the consequences of their own acts, but they don't like to think that what they do or say may make a difference to someone else. And so they say, "Am I my brother's keeper? Am I going to be responsible for him as well as for myself? He's quite able to look after himself. What does it matter to him what I do or don't do?"

Now you can no more help being your brother's keeper than you can help being you. We are all bound together in such a wonderful way, we are all so dependent on each other, that we can't avoid being keepers of our brothers and sisters.

When Michael Angelo was painting a picture or carving a statue he used to wear a candle fastened to his forehead so that his shadow might not fall on his work. But there is no magic candle that will keep the shadow of our influence from falling on those around us. We cannot help casting shadows on others, we cannot help influencing them in some way. That is quite certain. The only thing that is not certain is what kind of influence we are going to have—a good one or a bad. Let me tell you two stories.

The first is about Josiah Wedgwood, the famous potter, who invented the beautiful Wedgwood ware that is so much admired. Josiah lived about a hundred years ago, and besides being a celebrated potter he was a thoroughly good man and a splendid Christian.

One day a nobleman came to the factory, and Mr. Wedgwood asked a lad of fifteen to take the visitor over the works and explain how things were done.

Now the nobleman was smart and clever, but he was not a God-fearing man. As he went on his round he began to use bad language and to make light of sacred things. At first the boy was shocked, but by and by he began to laugh at the smart remarks. Mr. Wedgwood who was following was hotly indignant.

When the nobleman returned to the office the potter picked out a vase of rare workmanship and began to point out its beauties and to describe how carefully and wonderfully it had been made. The nobleman was charmed and held out his hand to receive the vase, but as Mr. Wedgwood was handing it to the visitor he let it fall, and it lay shattered in a hundred pieces.

The nobleman was very angry. He reproached his host for having destroyed the beautiful vase which he had so much wished to possess, but the potter replied, "My lord, there are things more precious than any vase—things which once ruined can never be restored. I can make another vase like this for you, but you can never give back to the boy who has just left us the pure heart which you have destroyed by making light of sacred things, and by using impure words."

The other story is about a hunchback. He was an Italian hunchback, and he was very poor, and very ugly, and very disagreeable. He used to sit all day under the shadow of the great Cathedral of St. Mark in Venice, and in order to earn a living he sold little plaster statues of the saints to the people who came to the cathedral to worship and pray.

When he went home at night Antonio—for that was the hunchback's name—would often beat his wife, and he used to say that that was the only pleasure he had in life. So you see he was not at all an agreeable person.

Now the people in these parts had a curious superstition. They believed that touching the hump of a hunchback would bring them luck. So, frequently, as they passed out and in of the cathedral, men and women would lay a hand for a moment on Antonio's hump. The hunchback was furious. Always he drove them off with angry words and rude blows. Why should they make capital out of his infirmity? He didn't interfere with them, why should they interfere with him?

One day, when the sun was blazing hot at noon, a young girl came across the cathedral square. She stopped to look at Antonio, and then very gently and timidly she asked, "Please, may I touch your hump?" The hunchback was just going to give his usual angry reply; but the girl looked so pretty and pleading and seemed so shy that, almost in spite of himself, he changed his mind and said gruffly, "If you like."

That night Antonio, for the first time in many weeks, omitted to beat his wife. The gentle touch of the girl's fingers seemed to have made him realize that a woman might be made for something better than beating.

Many months passed away and Antonio had returned to his old surly ways, when one day the girl came again to the square and stood before him. This time she was dressed all in black, but the hunchback recognized her at once. "Well, what do you want now?" he asked crossly.

The girl smiled and laid her soft hand gently on his rough, stained one. "Only to thank you," she replied. "I was in great trouble that summer day when I came to you, but after I touched you the trouble all went away. They say you don't like people to touch you, but I can't understand it. It must be so wonderful to be able to take away people's troubles like that—just at a touch. You must feel"—and her voice grew soft and full of wonder—"you must feel like God."

From that day the little hunchback never beat his wife, and he became so gentle and kind that all who would might touch his hump, and nobody feared him.

Boys and girls, we can live in two ways. We have it in our power, by our own selfish, careless lives, to make others unhappy, to make them the worse for knowing us. But we have it also in our power, by the help of God's grace, to live true, unselfish, loving lives, and in so doing to make others happier and better.

Which way are you going to live? Which way are you going to "keep" your brother?

He toiled on the street for his daily bread,
  Jostled and pushed by the surging throng.
"No one has time to watch," he said,
  "Whether I choose the right or the wrong;
No one can be by me misled."

He chose the wrong, and thought no one cared:
But a child lost that day his ideal of strength;
A cynic sneered at the soul ensnared;
A weak man halted, faltered, at length
Followed him into the sin he had dared.[1]

George Lee Burton.

THE MAN WHO WALKED WITH GOD.

And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.—Gen. v. 24.

If you open your Bible at the fifth chapter of Genesis you will find a list of men who were descended from Adam. It begins with Seth and ends with Noah and his sons. About all these men we are told the same thing—they lived a certain number of years, and then they died. There is just one exception. Towards the end of the list we come to a man of whom we are told something different—"And all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

Did you ever think what these words mean—"Enoch walked with God"? They mean that Enoch chose God as his Friend and sought to follow wherever He led. The world had become very wicked in the days of Enoch, but in spite of all the wickedness around him he kept on trying to please God. And then one day God took him to walk with Him in Heaven.

Now God wants to be our Friend too, to walk with us every day of our life. But if we are going to walk with Him there are some things we must do for Him, and there are some things He will do for us.

I.

If we are going to walk with God there are some things we must do for Him, there are one or two rules we must keep.

1. *We must be willing to walk in the path He chooses.*—Have you ever asked a particular boy or girl when you were coming out of school—"Will you walk home with me to-day?" Well, supposing that boy or girl consented to walk home with you, and supposing you came to a place where two roads parted, and your friend wanted to go one way and you the other, what would happen? One of you would need to give in, or you would have to separate. So if we are going to walk with God, we must agree to go His way. He knows much better than we do, and if we put our hand in His He will always lead us along the best path.

2. If we wish to walk with God, *we must love the things that He loves, and hate the things that He hates.*—How do you make a friend? Perhaps you never thought about it, but it really is because you and a certain boy or girl have something in common. Your friend likes something that you like—the same story-books, or the same games, or the same hobbies. Or perhaps it is just something in his nature that answers to something in yours.

And if we are going to "walk with God," to be God's friend, we must have something in common with Him. We must learn to love all things good and pure and noble, and to hate all that is unworthy and sinful.

3. And then if we wish to be God's friend and walk with Him *we must obey Him.*—What our earthly friends ask us to do is not always right or wise, but God never makes a mistake. Sometimes He asks us to do hard things, but He never asks us to do anything that would harm us. Our love for our earthly friends is a poor thing if we do not try to do something to serve them—something that costs us a little—and our love for God is a poor, shabby thing if we do not seek to serve Him, and obey Him, and please Him.

II.

But there are also the things that God does for us when we walk with Him.

1. And the first is—*He helps us to walk straight.*—If you shut your eyes and tried to walk without anything to guide you, do you know what would happen? You would walk round in a circle. It might be a very big circle, but still it would be a circle. The reason is that your strides are not equal because your legs are not exactly the same length. So, in trying to balance yourself, you would gradually veer round to one side or the other. It is only your eyes that help you to go straight.

Now God is "eyes" for those who walk with Him. We cannot see the path, and if left to ourselves we should walk round in circles and never get any farther. But God sees the path. He can lead us straight on, and He chooses the way that is best for us.

2. And then *God supports those who walk with Him.*—Sometimes the path is rough and thorny, but He is always ready to stretch out a helping hand, and to ease the bleeding feet.

3. But the most wonderful thing about God's friendship is that *those who walk with Him become a little bit like Him.*—People say that we grow to resemble those we live with or of whom we see a great deal. Even creatures grow like their surroundings. The Polar bear is white because it lives among the snows. Some animals—such as the ermine—change their coat to match the season; they are white in winter and brown or fawn, like the earth, in summer. Lions are sandy-coloured to suit the deserts in which they live, tigers are striped so that they may be invisible in the jungle. Soles and flounders resemble sand, frogs are green and brown like the earth and the weeds among which they live, and some caterpillars and moths look so like the twigs or the leaves of the trees on which they are resting that it is almost impossible to distinguish one from the other.

There is a beautiful story of a statue which a sculptor carved out of a rock near a village on the Continent. It was the figure of a young man with a very beautiful and noble face. And the sculptor prophesied that one day a youth would live in that village who would have a face exactly like the face of the statue. At first the people of the village came to gaze upon the statue and to wonder at its beauty. But by and by they became accustomed to it and passed it without even glancing at it. And the sculptor's prophecy was well-nigh forgotten.

Years passed, and one day a little boy was born in the village. When he grew big enough to run about by himself he loved to visit the statue, for he thought he had never seen anything so beautiful. Every day he came to gaze upon it, and at last there came a day when he stood beside it and someone passing said, "Look, he has the face of the statue!" And all the people saw the resemblance and rejoiced, for it had also been prophesied that the man who resembled the statue should do great things for his country. And so it came to pass.

So it is with us too. If we choose God as our friend and walk with Him every day, if we love the things that are true and noble and good, we shall become like Him. Even our faces will show the difference. They will be lit up with a new beauty.

"Enoch was not; for God took him." We do not know exactly what that means. We know only that Enoch did not die like other men. Perhaps nobody could explain the story better than did a little girl. She had just come in from Sunday school and her mother asked her what the lesson was about. She said—"It was all about a man who used to go for walks with God. His name was Enoch. One day they took a specially long walk. And they walked on and on until at last God said to Enoch, 'You are very far from home and you must be very tired; you had better just come in and stay.' And he went."

Some day God will take us too. But we need not be afraid. If we have walked with Him on earth then He will just ask us to come and walk with Him in Heaven. And we shall put our hand in His and go.

LITTLE COMFORTS.

He called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us.—Gen. v. 29.

THERE was once a very little girl, so little as to be almost a baby, and she had a hot little temper which blazed out suddenly every now and then. One day when she had flown into a passion her father exclaimed, "Little spitfire!" Baby stopped and solemnly looked at him, but said nothing. The same day her mother received news which made her very sad, so sad that she could not help crying. Baby, who had a warm little heart as well as a warm little temper, was distressed too. She climbed on her mother's knee, put her arms round her mother's neck, and lisped, "Poo' Mummy, don't ky, don't ky!" And mother dried her tears at the touch of those clinging arms and hugged the tiny comforter and whispered, "Mother's little comfort." When Baby was dropping over to sleep that night she was heard repeating softly to herself, "Daddy's 'itta 'pitfire, Mummy's 'itta tumfort." And for many a day after if you asked her name she promptly replied, "Daddy's 'itta 'pitfire and Mummy's 'itta tumfort."

To-day I want to tell you of someone in the Bible who was both his father's and his mother's "little comfort." In fact his name just means "comfort," though the Hebrews pronounced it "Noah." The Bible doesn't tell us exactly why Lamech, Noah's father, called his little son "Comfort," but it gives us several hints, and we guess the rest.

Noah's father and mother had evidently been having a hard struggle to make a living. They had toiled early and late and their hard work had not had great results. Perhaps the soil was at fault, perhaps a blight had fallen on the crops. Perhaps a flight of locusts had alighted on the fields and eaten up every green thing. We are not told. All we know is that they were feeling that they had struggled hard and had failed. And then, when they were feeling specially down-hearted, God sent them their little son, and Lamech and his wife took new heart and fresh courage from God's gift to them. They felt that here was something that more than made up for all their disappointments, so they called him Noah—"Little Comfort."

Can't you imagine Lamech talking to his wife and saying, "We shall try again for the sake of the boy. And this time we shall succeed"? And they would both go forward hopefully, looking to the time when baby Noah would be a big boy and ready to work along with them.

But it was not only to his parents that Noah was a comfort. He was a comfort to God. Noah was born at a time when the people around were very wicked.

They loved evil. They loved it to such an extent that they intentionally forgot God. They put Him out of their lives as if He did not exist, and they went their wicked way rejoicing in it, and trying hard just how wicked they could be. Among them all there was only one who remembered God and listened to His voice, and it was Noah. God's heart was nearly broken with the wickedness of the men whom He had created. Noah was His one comfort. By and by God saw that the only way to stop the terrible wickedness was to destroy the doers of it. And so, as you know, He sent the flood and drowned the determined evil-doers. But Noah and his family He saved alive in the ark.

We too can be Noahs, boys and girls. We can comfort our fellow-men and we can comfort God.

(1) How can we comfort our fellow-men? In thousands of ways—big ways, and little ways, and middle-sized ways. We can begin with the little ways. We can begin to be Noahs at home. We can notice when father is tired or mother needs a helping hand. We can slip in and do our little bit to help. That will be acting Noah. We can take the little ones and amuse them for half an hour till mother gets a rest. We can run an errand for father or offer to post his letters. We can show little brother how to do that sum which he has already wiped out half a dozen times on his slate. We can mend little sister's doll and dry the tears which she

has been shedding because its arm has come off. We can begin, I say, with the little ways; but we shall not end with them. If we begin with the little ways, we shall go on without knowing it to the big ways, and shall end, God helping us, by being a comfort to our day and generation.

(2) And we can comfort God. "That sounds strange," you say. "I always understood that God comforted His children. I didn't think He needed to be comforted Himself." That is just where you and many others make a mistake. God needs comfort. He needs it terribly. For after all, "comfort" is just another name for "love," and God hungers more than we can say, or think, or imagine for the love of His children on earth. He longs for it with a longing unspeakable. And the pity of it is that some people think God can get along quite nicely without them. Are you going to be God's "comforts" too, dear children? God hopes you are.

ONE OF OUR BEST FRIENDS.

And the rain was upon the earth.—Gen. vii. 12.

Have you ever taken any interest in rain? Perhaps you are not very fond of it. You think it is rather a spoil-sport. All it seems to do is to interrupt plans. You arrange a nice picnic or excursion in the summer time, and on comes the rain and you are obliged to stay at home. Or perhaps you risk setting out although the sky looks threatening, and you arrive at your destination and have just got the fire lit and the kettle boiled for tea when suddenly there is a perfect thunder-plump, and you have to gather your belongings together, and run as fast as you can for shelter.

Well of course all that is very provoking; but, after all, the rain couldn't help your having fixed the picnic for that particular day and hour, and it couldn't help falling at that particular time. It just had to do what it was told. The rain is one of our very best friends, and we are going to find out some of the things it does.

1. First of all, *rain makes things grow.* If there were no rain, the flowers and the trees would die, the most perfect seed would come to nothing. But not only would the flowers perish, the animals would perish,

and the boys and girls too. For if it ceased to rain there would, in time, be no food and nothing to drink, and we should all die of starvation and thirst. Perhaps some of you may think, "Oh, but we could get water from streams and wells." But what is it that feeds the streams and wells? Just the rain that comes down from the sky and sinks into the ground and comes up again in the form of springs. You know how small the streams are after a long dry spell in summer. That is just because there has been no rain to feed them.

2. Besides making things grow the rain *refreshes and beautifies.* How green the grass looks after a shower, how beautiful it is with all the little drops glistening on each blade, and how the drooping flowers hold up their heads again! Have you noticed also how sweetly everything smells—the leaves on the trees, and the flowers in the garden, and the clover in the fields?

3. Then rain is a *great cleanser.* It purifies the air, and makes it good to breathe. You may not think that there is much dirt in the air, but if you look into a rain-water barrel you will see at the bottom quite a lot of dirt, and this has all been brought down out of the air by the rain.

4. There is one other thing that rain does. *It wears away rocks.* If you went to Egypt you would see the figure of the Great Sphinx which was carved out of stone thousands of years ago. It has the body of a lion and the head of a man. Until lately the Sphinx was almost perfect, but some years ago people began

to make channels to lead the water of the Nile through the land so that the bare desert parts might become fruitful. Then they planted trees. The sun drank up the water from the channels, and the moisture came down again in the form of rain, and where there was formerly a very dry climate there are now plenteous showers. Do you know what has happened? The poor Sphinx is beginning to lose his nose! It is the rain that is doing it all. And what it does to the Sphinx, it is doing to the rocks too. You might think it would require an earthquake or a very heavy blow or an explosion to split a rock. A rock may be cleft that way, but it can be done just as surely by the rain through the ages.

God's love is just like the rain. It comes down gently and quietly and fills our hearts. Like the rain it makes the flowers grow—the flowers of unselfishness and goodness. Like the rain it refreshes and beautifies. It restores those who have become weary by the way, it makes ugly characters beautiful. Like the rain it purifies. It cleanses us from all that is bad and unworthy and makes us pure. Like the rain it breaks the rocks, the hard rocks of indifference and opposition.

God fills our hearts with His love. He gives us it freely. But He wants us to go and be drops of rain for Him. He wants us to try to make other people happy, to make their lives a little sweeter and more beautiful. We can all do it—by a smile, by a kind word, by a helpful deed.

Perhaps some of you may say, "Oh, but I am so small, and there is so little that I can do." A raindrop is a very small thing and you might think it wouldn't matter whether it fell or not. But it is the single raindrops that make up the showers, and if each raindrop made up its mind not to fall there would be no shower and the flowers would die of thirst.

In India there is a wonderful gorge on the river Nerbudda. The stream cuts its way between two high cliffs of marble. How do you think it managed to do this? It did not happen all in a day. It was the water that did it. Each little drop of water did its part and helped to wear away its own little atom of marble through the ages. So do your part, even though it be a tiny one, and you will help to carry out God's great plan for the world.

THE HAND.

The hand of man.—Gen. ix. 5.

Did you ever notice people's hands? How different they are! They are like those green and white striped grasses called "gardener's garters"—you never find two exactly alike. Even in the same family you see hands of different shape and different size. And to those who know about such things, the shape of the fingers, and the lines on the palm, and even the very finger-nails tell a history.

Some of you older boys and girls have read Conan Doyle's great stories about Sherlock Holmes. Conan Doyle got his idea of Sherlock Holmes from a certain Dr. Joseph Bell, who was such a clever man at noticing trifles and putting them together and making a whole story out of a few details, that it was said he could go into a railway carriage and by glancing at the hands of the various passengers could tell you their occupations and much of their life's story.

Even you yourselves have noticed certain things about other people's hands. For instance—the hands of a labouring man are not in the least like those of a watchmaker, an engraver, or a person who writes all day. And some of you little ones who get your faces washed know that there are very hard hands, as well as nice soft ones. A real nurse's hand is both strong and soft. A doctor's may be the same, but it must also have a very delicate touch.

Then perhaps some of the boys have seen men who had tremendous strength in their hands. But it was just a boy of whom we are told in the Bible that he killed both a lion and a bear. How strong his hand must have been! It was delicate as well; for—think of it!—that boy could play the harp most beautifully. Sculptors have often tried to represent him in marble, sometimes as a boy, oftener as a man. But with their cold stone they could never show us the living hand of David.

1. *Her hand.*—You remember the first hand you ever noticed? It was your mother's, wasn't it? You know every line and mark upon it—the first finger of the left hand, with the marks that the needle has made, the knuckles—perhaps they tell of hard work—and the palm. You never saw a hand quite like it. It can do all sorts of things—brush your hair, iron the frocks for the picnics, perhaps even scrub the floors. There have been men who, when they were away in foreign countries, loved to think of that hand. It comforted them. And there have been others who could not bear to think of it. They had done what was wrong, and felt they could not look their mother in the face.

2. *My hand.*—Now, there's your own hand—"my

hand." It has a little history written on it already. The mark of that cut you got two years ago, and that big joint on your fore-finger—it was caused by a chilblain.

But these are just trifles. Speaking seriously, what is your hand for? For service—for doing things with. Who is its master or mistress? You are. No wonder, then, that the hand is mentioned in the Bible oftener than almost anything else; for the Bible is just written about men and women, boys and girls; what they do, and how they are rewarded or punished. It is, in fact, a great book about the hands. And then think of this. Each of you has a pair of hands, and they may at your bidding do either good or evil. Your hands are you. If you have a careless mind, then, according to the Bible, your hand is the same. It speaks of "the hand of the diligent," the "slack hand," "clean hands," the hand that is "cruel," and the hand "stretched out to help."

There is a hand I should like to speak to the girls about. It is an old-fashioned, but a very beautiful one—the hand of the virtuous woman. "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." Some of you girls are anxious to have beautiful hands. I can tell you how to get them. Imitate the woman of the Book of Proverbs. The loveliest hands on earth are the hands that are ever busy finding something to do for others.

3. *His hand.*—A few years ago I went with a lady to

see an interesting church. We had been out for a walk together and had talked to each other just about ordinary everyday things. But in the church was a picture of Jesus Christ. When my companion saw it she knelt down in deepest reverence to pray. And a feeling like that comes when one tries to think of "His hand."

From beginning to end the story of Christ's hand is a story of love. "Jesus put forth his hand"; "He laid his hands on them"; "He took her by the hand." It was Christ's hands which broke the bread that fed the hungry multitude. It was the same hands which broke the bread for His disciples at their last supper. Yes, and these loving hands were nailed to the Cross for you and me. And these hands of Christ's are still busy. They are still caring for His children. They are still ready to help and guide all who come to Him.

An Alpine climber once came to a dangerous gap in the ice, where the only way of crossing was to place his foot in the outstretched hand of the guide. He hesitated and the man noticed it. "Do not fear, sir," said the guide. "That hand never yet lost a man."

Boys and girls, we may trust ourselves to Christ. He never lost, He never will lose, any who come to Him.

THE RAINBOW.

And the bow shall be in the cloud.—Gen. ix. 16.

THERE have been many fancies in different countries about the rainbow. One is that where the rainbow rests there is buried gold; but go as far as you will, you can never reach the spot where the rainbow rests. Some people have called it a bridge from earth to heaven. The old Greeks called it Iris, the messenger of the gods to men, who carried the staff of peace in her hand. That was a beautiful fancy.

We know that the rainbow is neither a bridge nor a being. It is the rays of the sun shining on falling rain, seen against the background of a black cloud, like the screen of a magic lantern. The rays of the sun, which seem white or colourless, are really made up of seven colours. The raindrops act as a prism, that is, they divide the white rays into their separate colours, and we see all seven—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. You may see the same thing in a piece of glass with many sides, such as you sometimes find on chandeliers.

There are many lessons that the rainbow teaches us, but I want to mention just two.

1. The first is that we should *look beyond the surface of things,* that we should try to get into their inner meaning. You know you are living not in one world, but in two. There is the outer world of things which can be seen and handled, and just because it is so near and so visible we are sometimes apt to imagine it is the only world. But there is also the inner world of thinking and feeling, and that is the real world after all.

Wordsworth once wrote a poem about a man called Peter Bell. And he tells us that this man had wandered about the country for thirty-two years. Over hill and dale, by woodland and stream he had roamed from Cornwall to Inverness and yet—

> A primrose by a river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more.

Wordsworth himself once saw a solitary primrose clinging to a rock, but he saw in it much more than "a yellow primrose." He saw in it a proof of God's care. If God could keep that little lonely primrose safely rooted to the rock, then He could take care of His great, big world and all the people in it. If God could give the little primrose a new life every spring, then He could give His children a new life and a new body when they were done with this old tired body here below.

At some seasons the fields of Palestine are covered with bright wild-flowers till they are a blaze of colour. They are so common that people are used to them and scarcely notice them. It was the same in Jesus' day

No one ever thought of taking much notice of the wild-flowers. Perhaps the children gathered them to make garlands, or plucked bunches with their hot little hands and left them to wither by the roadside. But Jesus said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." And He taught them that if God so clothed the lilies, He would also clothe them.

Long before men were on the earth the rain had fallen and the sun had shone, and before Noah's day many men had seen rainbows and had looked at them with curiosity, or fear, or admiration. But Noah, beholding the lovely thing in the midst of the dark mist and cloud and rain, saw in it the token of God's mercy. It was a promise to him from God of His kindness ever after.

So try to get beyond the surface, boys and girls; look for the hand of God in all His beautiful, wonderful world. The world is far more marvellous than a fairy palace if we have only eyes to see it. God has written His messages of love and mercy on every little flower that blows, on every little insect that spreads its wings on the summer breeze, on every snowflake, on every little fleecy cloud, on every crimson sunset. Have we eyes to read God's messages?

2. And the other lesson is that we should *look for the*

rainbow in the rain. For the rain comes to us all, sooner or later, the rain of trouble and difficulty.

God knows that if the sun were always shining on His world the little flowers would become parched, and would wither and die. God knows that if the sunshine of prosperity were always shining on our lives the beautiful flowers of kindness and sympathy and love and unselfishness would shrivel up and decay. And so in His love He sometimes sends us the rain of sorrow and difficulty in order that these fair flowers of character may come to perfection.

But there is always a rainbow with God's rain, and He means you to find it. He means you to look for the bright side—

The inner side of every cloud
Is bright and shining;
I therefore turn my clouds about
And wear them always inside out
To show the lining.

Remember it takes the sunshine as well as the cloud to make the rainbow. Look for the sunshine and wear it on your face. Then you will be one of God's own sunbeams lightening the dark places of the earth.

It isn't raining rain to me,
It's raining daffodils!
In every dimpling drop I see
Wild flowers on the hills!
A glow of grey engulfs the day
And overwhelms the town—
It isn't raining rain to me—
It's raining roses down!

It isn't raining rain tome,
  But fields of clover bloom,
Where any buccaneering bee
  May find a bed and room.
A health, then, to the happy!
  A fig to him who frets!
It isn't raining rain to me—
  It's raining violets!

MAKING A NAME.

Let us make us a name.—Gen. xi. 4.

The people of Babylon wished to make themselves a name. There might be nothing wrong in that; most people would like to make a name for themselves. But what kind of name, and how was it to be made? The Babylonians were a great and powerful people. They grew proud and arrogant and selfish. And when they were at the height of their power, when they thought they were making a name and an empire that would last for ever, God overthrew their kingdom, and broke down all their ambitions. They had very large cities, with great walls, and huge palaces. These are now just heaps of rubbish, and only of some of them are even the names known. The empire which thought nothing could overthrow it was brought to nothing. It is God who rules the kingdoms of the world. One after another the great kingdoms have risen and passed away. They made a name and then God gave their power to another, and they sank almost out of memory.

1. It is the same with people as with nations. What strange, and sometimes foolish things men do to be

famous, to make themselves a name! One man works night and day and grasps at every penny, because he wants to be known as a very rich man. Another starts to walk round the world, or to cross the Atlantic in a small boat. These are poor ways of being famous. Others long to gain an honoured name as great painters or musicians.

Napoleon was one who was determined to make himself a name. He did it. From an unknown boy he made himself an emperor. But he did it without concerning himself about God's will at all. He thought God was on the side of the largest army. To gratify his own pride and ambition he plunged all the great countries of Europe into war. Thousands and thousands of soldiers were killed, and lands were laid desolate where his armies passed. Women and children lost their husbands and fathers—all that he might make his name. Nothing could stand before him—so he thought. He was like the people in Babel who thought they could build a tower to the sky. But God saw the empire he built, and that it was built with pride, and selfish ambition, and without any regard for the good of God's other people in the world. And so, at the height of his fame, God stopped his building, and the emperor died a prisoner in exile.

Is ambition wrong then? Is it wrong to wish to do something great and to be remembered by it? There are different kinds of ambition. Without some kind of ambition a man is a poor creature. He is careless about what he does, and aimless in his life. All the best men have had a high ambition, but not merely an ambition for fame.

When Abraham Lincoln was a great ungainly lad of fourteen or fifteen, people used to ask him what he meant to be. And the boy would reply with a chuckle, "I am going to be President of the United States." Everyone thought it was a good joke. What could the shabby, awkward lad living in the backwoods know about the ruling of a great nation? Yet, not forty years later, the people of the United States were mourning the loss of the greatest President they had had since the days of Washington.

There is a noble kind of ambition, an ambition to work with God, and build along with Him; not only to get fame and pleasure for ourselves, but to make the world a better place for others, to bring knowledge and happiness to them, to lessen their pain, and to bring nearer the time when God's kingdom will come, and everybody will know and love Him. That is the best ambition we can have.

2. We are all making a name of some kind. It is very unlikely that any of our names will be remembered in history, or that books will be written about us. Yet we are making a name and building a monument for ourselves. That building is just all that we have done—the good and the bad. Our thoughts and our actions are the bricks in our building, and when the monument is finished it will be seen what we have made, and whether or not it is good.

Long, long ago, there lived in India a very rich and powerful king. Now this king knew that some day he must die, and he wished to leave behind him something that people would remember him by. So he determined that he would build somewhere in the mountains a palace more beautiful than any that had ever been erected in the history of the world. Accordingly he sent for his builder Jakoob, and he gave him a great deal of money to go to the spot he had selected, far away among the hills, and there build him a marble palace.

Now, when Jakoob arrived at the place the king had chosen, he found that the people were wretchedly poor, and were dying of hunger. So first he spent all his own money, and then he spent all the king's money in caring for the sick and feeding the hungry.

By and by the king came to the mountains to see how his palace was progressing. And he found that there was not one stone laid upon another. Then he sent for the builder and inquired the reason, and Jakoob confessed that he had spent all the money on feeding and caring for the poor and the sick and the hungry. Thereupon the king struck him with his sword and cast him into a dark prison. And he vowed a solemn vow that Jakoob should die on the morrow.

But that night the king had a strange dream. He dreamt that he had gone to heaven, and there the angels showed him a wonderful palace. It was the most beautiful palace he had ever seen, far, far more beautiful than the one he had planned to build in the mountains.

The king asked whose palace it was, and how it came to be so beautiful. And the angels replied, "This is the beautiful palace of beautiful deeds which was built for you by Jakoob, the wise builder. After all the buildings of the earth have vanished away, this one will still endure."

God grant, boys and girls, that you may each and all build such a palace of beautiful deeds, that you may make yourselves a name that will endure in heaven.

THE VOICE OF GOD.

The Lord said unto Abram.—Gen. xii. 1.

I WONDER what impression the mention of Abraham makes on your minds. Long ago, boys and girls used to think of him as a man dressed with coat, waistcoat, and trousers, like their own fathers or grandfathers. Your idea may be quite different. This is an age of pictures. One can see the dress of people from Syria or Chaldea any day, and watch their mode of life as well. No doubt most of you have seen a picture of a modern Arab chief. You have admired his dark handsome face, his fine upright bearing, his flowing cloak of bright scarlet, and his novel head-dress made of a handkerchief bound on his head by a fillet of rope. And you certainly have not failed to remark the spear which he holds in his hand. That spear is more than a weapon; it is also his standard. He plants it in the ground when he pitches his tent, and it marks for his followers the centre of the encampment.

What a modern Bedouin is to-day, Abraham was 4000 years ago. So little do fashions and customs change in the East that we can picture him as an Eastern shepherd chieftain.

Terah, his father, with the family, their bondsmen or slaves, and their various "cattle," as well as the household belongings (which would be piled on the backs of the camels) had migrated from Ur of the Chaldees to the highlands of Northern Mesopotamia. We do not know the reason for this migration. Probably they hoped to find more room and better pasture for their flocks. Or perhaps the move had to do with their religion. In Chaldea they found themselves surrounded by people who worshipped more than one God. We are not told a great deal about Terah. It has been said that he was an idolater; but Abraham was doubtless the leading spirit in the removal, and he was no idolater. He was a man who had meditated much, he seemed ever to hear a voice calling him away, and he felt it was the voice of God.

They settled at last in Padan-aram, on a spot about fifty miles east of the Euphrates and near a city called Haran. Their encampment, when it was set up, would be something like a highland township, only with tents instead of houses. Abraham led a simple natural life there—a tent of camel's hair for a house, and the open air for his day's work. Every morning he would go round to give orders, or to take a look at and perhaps count his flocks. It was work which gave plenty of time for thought, and Abraham's mind was ever busy. It was busy with thoughts of God.

As there were days in Haran, so there were nights—nights of marvellous wonder and beauty. On one such night Abraham went out of his tent and gazed up into the starry heavens. The whole story of his life came back to him, and he thought of his surroundings in Haran. It was his home, yet not a real home, for there were idols in the tents. Abraham knew it. Sarah had her daily household duties, and did not seem to understand when he spoke to her about God's voice. So Abraham waited. The silence was God's opportunity. God came near and spoke. And this time He gave a command.

No one heard the command but Abraham himself. It laid hold of him in such a way that henceforth he had no will but the will of God. It said a certain course was right, and Abraham felt he must take it. Perhaps you have thought that God appeared to Abraham in the form of a man. "God has spoken to me"—that is an Arab phrase, and it is used when the speaker or writer feels that a deep impression has been made on his mind.

So God's voice has spoken to many besides Abraham. You remember how it came to a little French maid in the fifteenth century. She was busy spinning in the garden under the pink petals of the apple-trees, when she heard a voice saying, "Little Jeanne, it is thou who must go to the help of the king of France: it is thou who shalt give him back his kingdom."

Jeanne knew that her country was very unhappy, that it was being overrun by the English and that her king was uncrowned and deserted. But what could she, a peasant child of thirteen, do?

"Daughter of God," said the voice, "thou must leave thy village and go forth into France."

"But I am only a poor girl," said Jeanne, "I know not how to ride a horse or how to make war."

Still the voice commanded "Go." And you know how little Jeanne obeyed, and how she, whom we call Joan of Arc, rode forth on her white charger, bearing her white banner, and so inspired the soldiers of France that they fought till France was saved and its king was indeed crowned.

And still God speaks to men and women, boys and girls. You know—we all know—that there are convincing and compelling voices that have no human form behind them. We feel impelled to do a certain thing, we know not how. Yes, and God calls us by many other ways. He calls us to higher things by the beauties of nature, and He calls us to service by the cries of our suffering brothers on earth. The cries of the sick and the sad and the helpless and the oppressed are just so many voices of God calling, calling, calling, night and day.

LOT'S CHOICE.

Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the Plain, and moved his tent as far as Sodom.—Gen. xiii. 12.

IN any map of the world Great Britain seems very small, doesn't it? But we say to ourselves, "That is one of the most wonderful countries in the whole world." A variety of things help to make it so. You know some of them. You hear about them at school. Well, Palestine is smaller; it is a mere strip. But if you look in your atlas you will see that it lies in a corner where Europe, Asia, and Africa all but touch each other. In olden times it formed a sort of highway between the powerful states on the north, and those whose centre lay along the Nile. It has been called a bridge, on the east of which was a great sea of sand, and on the west a great sea of water. But, for its own inhabitants, Palestine could be a very isolated or lonely place. They might, if they chose, dwell entirely apart. There were no harbours on the west. On the north there were great mountain ranges; on the east and south the deserts. Such was the country of Canaan to which God led Abraham.

Abraham, and Lot his nephew, went down into it.

They first pitched their tents in Shechem, a spacious well-watered valley. It seemed just the sort of place that Abraham had longed for. There was one great tree there which was famous for centuries after. It was a tree something like our own English oak. Probably, however, there was no town called Shechem when Abraham arrived, so he could encamp on open unoccupied soil, and under the great oak he could rear an altar to Jehovah.

But some trouble with the people drove Abraham out of Shechem, so later he shifted his camp to the "Mount of Bethel." It was in many respects a wonderful place. From it the whole land round about could be seen. It was a district too in which one might find prosperity and at the same time live a hardy, vigorous life.

We read that Abraham built another altar there and called again upon the name of the Lord. Both he and Lot had become rich men. They had flocks and herds —so many indeed that their herdsmen, cramped for room, quarrelled with each other. Abraham knew of the quarrels, and the thought of them disturbed him. "Let us have an end of this strife," he said to Lot. "Why should we or our herdsmen quarrel? We are brethren. Let us separate. Look round about. If you take the left hand, I will take the right, and if you depart to the right hand, I will go to the left." It was a simple and beautiful way of ending a quarrel.

As he listened to Abraham, Lot looked down on the green valley of the Jordan. It was almost tropical in the luxuriousness of its vegetation; and there were fine cities in the valley as well. He had often heard of them, more particularly of Sodom and Gomorrah. Their inhabitants were said to be very advanced in learning, and also to have invented all sorts of pleasures for themselves. Lot felt he would like to live in one of those cities, and pitch his camp near at hand. So he chose the rich soil, and the chance of an easy and thoughtless life. Selfish, wasn't it? He should have deferred to his uncle, and said, "You are the older, make you the choice." But he didn't.

The great Napoleon was a very selfish man. "After all," he said to someone who was with him in his banishment, "I care only for people who are useful to me, and only so long as they are useful." His followers knew it. One of them confided to another, "The Emperor cares only for those from whom he expects some service; he is what he is; we cannot change his character. It is because of that character that he has no friends, and has so many enemies, and indeed that we are at St. Helena." Punishment had come to him at last; for when he wanted real friends he found only courtiers.

Lot "moved his tent as far as Sodom"; so says the story. In doing it, he thought only of himself. He forgot about his wife, and what was even worse, he forgot about his two girls. He forgot that he was taking them to live in a wicked place.

So although Lot is spoken of as a "righteous" man, his selfishness and forgetfulness of those nearest and dearest to him will be told against him as long as the world lasts.

How refreshing it is to go back to the thought of Abraham away up among the hills! Better than the enjoyment of these, he had God's blessing, and the promise. "Lift up now thine eyes," God said. . . . "All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed *for ever.*" There was a "for ever" in the promise. There comes a time when two ways lie before us—the mountain path of giving up, with God, and the level path of ease. Lot chose the latter, and the story of his life darkens towards its close. If we choose as Abraham did, we shall have God as our Friend, and what is more, if we trust Him we shall have that friendship for ever and ever.

AN ANCIENT BATTLE.

When Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen.—Gen. xiv. 14.

ABRAHAM had settled in the third and chief resting-place of his life-time—Mamre. There, under the shelter of one of the great oaks for which Mamre was famous, he pitched his tent. He dwelt in a sort of state, as we understand the term; he had three hundred slaves ready at his command. Among his neighbours he must have been considered a man to be reckoned with, for four of the neighbouring chiefs had allied themselves with him.

One day Abraham's peace was suddenly broken in upon. A messenger came hurriedly to the camp with very disturbing news. A band of four kings had descended upon the Jordan valley and were trying to compel the submission of the people. They had succeeded in reducing them to a helpless state of terror. Five of their kings had tried to defend themselves and their peoples, but everything had gone against them. They had been quite conquered; and those who had not got caught in the slime pits of the country had been driven north as prisoners of war. Lot was one of the latter. So you see that Lot's choice had brought upon him and his household troubles that he had never dreamt of. He had not thought that the beautiful valley was envied by people who wanted to find an easy way down to Egypt. And he had not taken into account that the easy-going and degraded inhabitants of the plain were neither brave nor chivalrous. They could not fight.

Abraham was only about twenty miles from the scene of disaster. He was not a soldier in the ordinary sense of the term; his people were shepherds, who could slay wild beasts, but could not fight with men. But he never dallied for a moment. He did not sit still and say, "Just as I expected; it serves him right. Is not this calamity just a punishment for his folly?" No: Abraham was ready to help. At once his servants were summoned. Then the neighbouring chiefs, his allies, rallied round him. One and all they set off in hot pursuit. In four or five days they overtook the enemy, near the source of the Jordan. Look at your maps when you get home, and you will see what a troublesome march they must have had.

They found the enemy "unprepared." Probably they were carousing, having, as they thought, a good time, under the impression that they were quite safe. The Patriarch, generally so silent and reserved, kept very wide awake. He waited for the darkness, then with his men he burst upon the sleeping host and scattered them. They fled in confusion. Abraham pursued and finally routed the army, rescuing the captives at a village called Hobah near Damascus.

It is the story of a very ancient battle. In a little country, a great and noble character, with his serfs at his back, fights for people whom he loves. But what seems to you not worth the name of a battle had a great result. The Bible story lifts the tale into the region of sacred things.

Two people came out to meet Abraham after the battle was over—the King of Sodom, acknowledging his indebtedness, and Melchizedek, described as King of Salem and Priest of the Most High God. This royal personage just appears and then vanishes; but he leaves us thinking of Abraham as more the friend of God than ever. He brought forth bread and wine, and blessed the Patriarch.

Melchizedek is such a type as we can imagine would fascinate John Bunyan. In the *Pilgrim's Progress* we read that after Christian's encounter with Apollyon "there came to him a hand with some of the leaves of the tree of life, the which Christian took and applied to the wounds that he had received in the battle, and was healed immediately. He also sat down in that place to eat bread, and to drink of the bottle (of wine) that was given to him a little before; so being refreshed he addressed himself to his journey."

Lot, when he was rescued, must have thought there was no one in the world to compare with his uncle. Don't you admire him too—this "father of scouts"? He was so splendidly swift and ready to act, his scheme of warfare was so perfect. But he was ready to do something besides fight; he was ready to kneel after the fight and receive Melchizedek's blessing. He was "prepared" for warfare, he was equally "prepared" to enter the presence of God.

I read a story the other day of a boy who had a strange dream. He dreamt that the richest man in his little town came to him and told him that he was tired of his money and his houses and his lands, and he wanted the boy to take his place. Then the old doctor arrived, and he said that he was weary of going up and down the streets healing sick folk, and would the boy get ready to become the town physician. Then the judge came, and he also was tired of his work. He wanted someone to try his cases and fill his place on the bench. Then the town drunkard, the shame of the village and its saddest sight, came on the scene, and he told the lad that he could not live much longer and he wanted somebody to be ready to take his place in the bars and on the streets.

That was a strange dream, but it was in a sense a true one. Boys and girls, you are all getting ready to fill some place in the world. What are you getting ready for? Are you getting ready to throw away your life like that poor village drunkard? Or are you getting ready to be like Abraham, a defender of the defenceless, and a friend of God?

THE TRIAL OF ABRAHAM.

Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah ; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.—Gen. xxii. 2.

THE first reading of this story hurts us. A little girl was listening to her father as he read it. She was deeply interested; but as he went on, something more than mere interest appeared in her face. When the story was finished, she jumped up from the stool on which she sat, and with passion in her childish voice, said, "That's not true, father!" She judged the story from what she knew of her own father and mother.

We want to judge it from Abraham's point of view. Abraham, as you know, was friendly with all the neighbouring chiefs. Although they did not worship Abraham's God, they were religious. He was constantly seeing them sacrificing what was near and dear to them —sometimes it was even their sons and their daughters. They did this hoping to please or to turn aside the wrath of their god or gods. Of course they had all noticed how Abraham, the great shepherd chief, loved his son Isaac. We can imagine how they would wonder what the difference between their religion and his meant. "You give up nothing for your God," they said to him. "You love your only son, but you keep him; we never hesitate to give up our firstborn."

And Abraham began to think about this a great deal: he brooded over it until at length it became a question between himself and God. Did he love his God as those people loved theirs? Was he willing to give up Isaac his only and well-beloved son? He did not believe he was. He lay awake at night asking himself many such questions. He gazed up at the stars, and felt that while the questions were unanswered there was a barrier between him and his great Friend.

One night there came the voice of God to him. He knew it, and it spoke—not asking a question, but giving a command. "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." You know how questions come and perplex us at night; and sometimes we feel convinced that God wants us to do a certain thing—we hear a command. Then we say to ourselves, "As soon as morning comes, I'll put things right with God; I'll live better; I'll give my whole life up to Him." Abraham said, "I am willing, whatever it may mean for me, to give up my best, mine only and well-beloved son, to God." So, early in the morning he rose, and with sad and silent determination set out with Isaac for Mount Moriah.

You know the whole story. On Mount Moriah, Abraham raised an altar, bound Isaac, laid him on the wood, had even raised his hand to strike with the knife, when there came again the voice of God—"Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." God really wanted no human sacrifice—only the spirit of giving up, the resignation of Abraham's will.

We are not told about the home-going, but we feel sure that Abraham and Isaac shared a deep happiness with each other. You have felt happy—have you not? —when you have obeyed your father and mother to the extent of giving up something you liked very much. And God let Abraham know that He approved. It was the climax in Abraham's life; he came out of the trial perfected through discipline—a great saint.

MOUNT MORIAH.

Get thee into the land of Moriah.—Gen. xxii. 2.

IF places could tell what they have seen, what stories some of them could relate! Some have been the scene of great deeds repeated again and again at different times in their history. Think of the coasts of the Dardanelles and what they have seen from the days of the Trojans until they witnessed the sunk mines and the naval bombardment of the recent war! Think of Westminster Abbey, where kings have been crowned and buried since Saxon times! Or the pyramids of Egypt, which have stood like silent witnesses while many dynasties passed away! They have seen the Pharaohs, and the Greeks, and now they look down on the British in possession of their land.

The land of Palestine has many such places, with a history so old that we cannot trace it to its beginning. Such a place is Mount Moriah. This is the name given to one of the hills on which Jerusalem is built.

I.

The first glimpse we get of Moriah takes us back some four thousand years, to a time when our own country had not a history at all. We see a little procession of four men wending its way through a district in Palestine known as "the land of Moriah." One was a very old man, one was a young lad, and the other two were servants. They had with them an ass, laden with provisions and a large bundle of wood. Two days they journeyed, and on the third they saw the hill for which they were bound. "Stay here," said the old man Abraham to his servants, "while my son Isaac and I go yonder and worship." And those two went on alone, the son bearing the wood to make a fire for the sacrifice, the father carrying fire and a knife.

Only one thing was wanting—there was no lamb to be offered. "Father," said the lad, "here is the wood and the fire, but where is the lamb?" And Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb." So they went on till they reached the appointed place, and then Abraham built his altar and laid his wood upon it, and on the wood, instead of a lamb, he bound his dear son, and prepared to offer him as a sacrifice to God. But just as he raised the knife, a voice called to him, telling him to do Isaac no harm, since God knew he would willingly give even his only son. And, looking round, Abraham saw a ram in a thicket near, which he took and offered instead.

That is the first glimpse we have of Mount Moriah. Now for the second.

II.

A great plague was sweeping over the land of Palestine. For three days it lasted, and thousands of people perished. Then it approached Jerusalem. As we read in the Bible, "an angel was sent to destroy it"; but he paused outside the city at a place where there was a threshing-floor. This belonged to a man called Araunah, who was busy threshing wheat in the Eastern fashion—by spreading it out on the ground and driving oxen over it.

Now David had been praying to God that the plague might be stopped, and the prophet Gad came to him and told him to go to the threshing-floor of Araunah, and build there an altar, and offer sacrifice upon it. Araunah looked out and saw the king coming up from the city with his servants, and went out to meet him, and asked him why he had done him the honour of coming there. Then David told him he had come to buy the place from him, and build an altar and sacrifice upon it that the plague might be stopped. Araunah wished to make him a present of the oxen for the sacrifice, but the king refused, and insisted on paying for them, because he would not offer to God what had cost him nothing. So the threshing-floor was bought, and the altar built, and in answer to David's prayer the plague stopped.

On this spot David determined to build a great Temple to God. But this was not to be in his time. However he collected a great store of gold and silver and brass and iron for the building of God's house, and left all these materials to his son Solomon, that he might carry out the plan.

III.

A few years later we see Mount Moriah again. The threshing-floor where Araunah drove his oxen over the heaps of corn is no longer there. Instead there is a great court divided into smaller courts, containing the magnificent palaces of King Solomon, and, in a court by itself, the beautiful Temple which he reared on the site of David's altar. It was built of costly stone, and was lined inside with cedar wood, carved and covered over with gold. Outside stood two tall brass pillars and a great altar for sacrifice. Inside were the golden candlestick and the table of shewbread and all the vessels of gold. And here the ark was brought, and placed in the Holy of Holies, with great rejoicing that at last a suitable house had been built to contain it.

For many years the Temple on Mount Moriah was the glory of Jerusalem and the centre of worship for all the people of Judah, but at last, for their sins, the enemy came upon the city. The Chaldæans, under King Nebuchadrezzar, besieged it and built a strong rampart round it to prevent any escape from within or any succour from without. After a long siege the enemy succeeded in making a breach in the wall, and poured into the city. The Temple was burned and levelled to the ground, and all its furniture and golden vessels were carried to Babylon. The people also were taken away as prisoners and exiles to a foreign country, there to mourn the loss of their land, and of their

Temple; but to learn that there also God could be worshipped, in spirit, and without sacrifices and ceremonies.

IV.

Years passed away, and Mount Moriah still lay desolate. Only a few poor people were left in the land, and they did not worship in Jerusalem. The Temple was still in ruins. But a new ruler reigned in Babylon—Cyrus of Persia, who had conquered it. This king gave permission to the Jews to return to their country. A great many of them preferred to stay in the land of their captivity, but some of them came back under Joshua and Zerubbabel and set to work to restore the Temple.

But this Temple was very different from that of Solomon. Here there were no stores of gold and silver. There was no fine wood to be had in the neighbourhood. The builders had to use what they could get, and they met with bitter opposition from their neighbours the Samaritans, who were angry that the Jews had refused to allow them to help in the building, because they were not true Jews, though they had partly adopted their religion. But at last, in spite of many difficulties, the Temple was rebuilt, and once more the people went up to worship on Mount Moriah.

V.

Jerusalem saw many changes after the days of the rebuilding of the Temple. The Jews struggled in vain to keep their independence, first against the Greeks, and later the Romans. They had to submit to those stronger than themselves, and to obey foreign and heathen rulers. By the Romans, Herod the Great was made king of the Jews. Herod was a very clever man and might have made a wise king, but he was one of the wickedest men who ever lived, and a cruel tyrant to his people. He put many of them to death, and punished their rebellions against him with great cruelty. He brought into the Holy City of Jerusalem foreign customs which were against the religion of the Jews. No wonder they hated him! When he offered to rebuild the Temple they refused at first to allow it. He had built a great deal in Jerusalem—strengthening the walls, and raising high towers of beautiful white stone. Beside these the Temple which Zerubbabel had built looked small and mean. It had been partly damaged too when Herod besieged the city at the time when he was made king. But the people would not have it touched.

At last Herod persuaded them to let him do so. He promised that he would not pull it down till he was quite ready to build the new one, and he had a thousand priests trained as masons and carpenters, so that none but priests might touch the Holy Place. Then a beautiful white building rose on Mount Moriah where the old Temple had stood. It was built of great blocks of white stone with plates of gold on the front, and looked at a distance like a mountain covered with snow. Inside it was the same as the old one, and it had the same furniture, because the Jews would not allow anything to be changed; but the building was much higher, and the porch was larger. At the doorway was a Golden Vine with leaves and clusters all made of gold.

It was to this beautiful Temple that Jesus came with His parents. It was from its courts that He drove out the money-changers and those that sold doves. It was in its courts that He walked and talked with His disciples; and when they called His attention to the great stones He said "There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

And this was what happened not many years later. The discontent of the Jews drove them into rebellion against their Roman rulers, and brought the Roman army against Jerusalem. After a terrible siege, the city was taken, the Temple, which had been fortified against them, was burned and the stones were removed from it, while the golden lamp and the table and other things were taken to Rome in triumph. Christ's prophecy was fulfilled, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

VI.

For nearly seventy years the Holy City lay in heaps of rubbish. Every stone of the Temple had been thrown down. No new buildings were put up, and jackals wandered through the desolate ruins of Jerusalem. For more than a hundred years no Jews were allowed to enter it, and then only to weep over the stones of the Temple. The Emperor Hadrian set up his own statue and one of the Roman god Jove on the spot where the Holy Place had stood. But as time went on the Christian faith spread throughout the Roman Empire, and the emperors themselves became its champions. New buildings rose on the Temple hill. They were Christian churches built by the Emperor Justinian on the spot that had been holy so long.

VII.

But now a new force and a new faith made themselves felt in the world. The Arabs rose suddenly into power and swept like a great wave from the west of Asia, over the north of Africa, to Spain. They were men of the desert, brave and chivalrous and simple in life. They besieged Jerusalem for four months, and then it surrendered. When Omar, the victorious general, entered the city he came riding on a camel, and dressed in a coarse cotton shirt and a sheepskin jacket. These Arabs were Muhammadans, who believed in one God and in Muhammad as His prophet, and regarded Christ merely as another, and inferior, prophet. Yet they promised, and faithfully fulfilled the promise, to spare the lives of the dwellers in the city, "in the name of God, merciful and pitying." They also promised not to pull down or occupy the Christian churches.

But they must have a place in which to pray, and it was agreed that they should have the spot on which Solomon's Temple had stood. On this spot was built the mosque of Omar, named after the conqueror. It was a rude wooden building, but it was replaced later by another, the Dome of the Rock, which is there to this day. It is one of the most beautiful churches in the world. It is a circular building, like a drum, with a great gilded dome supported on pillars and round arches. This is built over the Holy Place, and round it is an octagonal arcade with pillars and round arches. These arches are covered with glass mosaics and over them are texts in golden letters on a blue ground.

VIII.

And to-day Mount Moriah has seen still another triumphal entry into Jerusalem. On the 11th of December, 1917, General Allenby, the Commander of the Allied troops in Palestine, entered the Holy City on foot. He chose to enter thus humbly. And the whole world admired the spirit of the man who thus set foot on one of the most sacred spots on earth. From the steps of the Tower of David a proclamation was read in Arabic, Hebrew, English, French, Italian, Greek, and Russian, assuring the people that since the city was regarded with affection by the followers of three great religions, Jewish, Muhammadan, and Christian, their sacred buildings would all be kept safe from harm. And so the great mosque of the Dome was guarded by Moslem and Indian troops.

What Mount Moriah may see in the future who can tell? One day—one happy day—it may see all the peoples of the earth at peace with each other, and worshipping there the one true God and Jesus Christ His Son.

DIGGING WELLS.

And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing (RVm 'living') water.—Gen. xxvi. 19.

THE boys and girls of this country scarcely know the real value of a well. Once a party of children gathered round a genuine old-fashioned one which supplied the water for a highland croft. The little girls lay flat on the grass and tried to see the reflection of their faces in the water, while the boys on their knees kept screaming with delight because someone had put a trout into the well and they could see it. One and all, they took the well for granted. It was one of the things in the world out of which they could get a little fun. They never thought of the fact that some man had had very hard work digging it.

I believe it was the same in Palestine long, long ago: the children took the wells—and there were a great many of them—as a matter of course. But more than children gathered round the wells of Palestine. Women came there to draw water. They loved the well simply because they met their friends there, and it was a place where sometimes very interesting things happened. Wells were a necessity in Palestine; for some parts of it were very dry, and we can imagine the effect that the finding of a spring would have on those who had been digging for a long time. They sometimes couldn't keep from singing for joy. We are told of one great man who dug wells. You know him; it was Isaac. He was a man who often meditated and dreamed dreams, for he had a very poetical mind; but he did not allow himself to forget that work had to be done. He made a special study of well-digging, and under his direction the well of our text was dug—"a well of living water."

Those old wells keep speaking parables to us. There are wells round about you. What are they?

1. *There are the wells which have been dug for you.*—These are many, but I shall mention one. There is your home. It meant a lot of digging, a lot of hard work and self-denial on your father's part before he provided your home. And it meant a lot of digging for your mother too. It meant a lot of thinking and planning and many busy hours with her needle and her brain. And yet, boys and girls, you take it all for granted. You have even been known to grumble, yes, *grumble,* because the home they had made for you was not just exactly what you wished in one or two small particulars. You forgot the love that had planned and provided for your happiness. Perhaps it would be truer to say you never realized that such a lot of thought and trouble went to providing a home. Think of it now. And the next time you are tempted to complain, say to yourselves, "No,

I shan't. I'll remember what it cost to dig this well."

2. Then *there are the wells that we dig for ourselves.*—These also are many, but again I want to speak of one.

In a large city lived a poor young woman who worked hard all day. She sometimes felt very sad and hopeless, for she had an invalid mother to keep, and however hard she worked she could hardly get ends to meet. One day a friend asked her to go to a meeting in a house not far off. She went, and found that this was a meeting where a number of young people were engaged digging. Digging in a house! Yes. They were all trying to find out the true meaning of a book of poems. The girl was not very clever, but she got a copy of the little book and took it home.

Then she began to dig. Night after night she kept digging, and at last she came upon a well of living water. Like the diggers in the Bible, she felt she could sing for joy, for from the little book there came the message that God is Love.

> God's in his heaven—
> All's right with the world!

says the poet she was studying. She did not need to be afraid of difficulties or sorrow any longer.

Most boys and girls read. We all know that. One need only go along the streets of a city in the morning to find message boys sitting on doorsteps, so absorbed in some half-penny paper that they seem to have entirely forgotten that the basket beside them is full of undelivered orders. They read; but they do not dig. Then the girls—don't many of them read only to idle away the time? And aren't some of their favourite books rather silly? There are amongst you, however, boys and girls who have a natural capacity for digging. To them, I say—Dig, dig, dig. You will get your reward—you will find the living water.

And I want to add this—for digging wells there is no soil like the Bible. Only dig deep enough there.

Try it, boys and girls, prove it, for it is a poor life indeed that never tastes of the real "well of living water."

A STUDY IN MEEKNESS.

And he removed from thence, and digged another well.—Gen. xxvi. 22.

A Sunday school teacher had a class of boys who understood that in their answers they were always to speak the truth. While giving a lesson on the "meek and quiet spirit," she put the question—"What would be gained by forgiving your brother until seventy times seven?" There came immediately the answer—"Nothing." She tried again—"If a boy followed any of you on the street and kept calling names at you all the way, what would you do?" After a pause the representative boy of the class answered with great deliberation, "I would ask him to stop once—twice—maybe three times, and if he still persisted, I would give him a thrashing."

Is there anything really gained by meekness? Though you may not think so, that is a question that some big people hesitate to face. They feel as the boy did while they know all the time that that feeling is wrong.

If you were asked who was the meekest man in the Old Testament, I suppose most of you would answer Moses, and you would probably be right. But there is another man who runs him very close—a man who comes in between two great characters and is so overshadowed by them that we are apt to overlook him. That man is Isaac.

I want to give you just two pictures out of Isaac's life.

1. The first is very well known to you. It is the picture of a youth climbing a mountain in the company of his father and carrying on his shoulders the wood for the burnt offering.

Perhaps you may have thought that Isaac was just a boy when he climbed that mountain, that he did not understand what was going to happen to him, and that it was mere idle curiosity that made him put the question—"Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" But Isaac was no mere boy: he was a young man of twenty, or perhaps even twenty-five. He understood perfectly the meaning of sacrifice, he understood perfectly what was happening. And yet he made no fuss. Meekly and willingly he allowed himself to be bound to the altar knowing that thus he was in some mysterious way serving his family and fulfilling God's will.

In this respect Isaac, more than any other man in the Old Testament, resembles the meek and gentle Jesus who laid down His life, a willing sacrifice, for the sake of others.

2. The second picture is that of a man digging wells. You know wells are very important and necessary

things in a dry, hot country, and Isaac was a great digger of wells.

Isaac had been driven by famine to seek food in the land of the Philistines and he encamped with his family and his belongings in the valley of Gerar. There he prospered and grew rich, and there he dug again the wells which Abraham his father had dug and which the Philistines had filled up with stones and rubbish.

By and by the Philistines grew jealous of Isaac and they asked him to move on. So he removed his camp to some distance.

Now the first necessity in the new camp was water —water for the people and the flocks—so Isaac directed his men where they might find a new spring, and there they dug a well. But what do you think? No sooner had they finished digging than along came the herdsmen of Gerar and announced—"This water is ours!" It was cool, wasn't it?—not the water, of course, but the behaviour of the men. Isaac might have made a fuss, but he saw it would do no good; so he just gave up the well and ordered his servants to dig another.

Would you believe it?—No sooner was that one completed than the herdsmen of Gerar came and claimed it too. Had ever man more cause for feeling provoked? But Isaac still kept his temper. He moved on and digged a third well, and this one he was allowed to keep.

Now I hope you won't run away with the idea that

Isaac was a "softy" to give up so easily. I think he showed his greatness by his magnanimity. It may have cost him a good deal of self-control to surrender these wells, but he wasn't going to waste time standing on his rights about trifles. His servants were only too ready to fight and he wasn't going to risk involving them in a quarrel that might end in bloodshed. After all, what did it matter? He could dig another well. I think if you look closely at the picture of the well-diggers you will see that Isaac looks very grand and noble, and the herdsmen of Gerar look very small and shabby.

Boys and girls, it takes a great man to give up a little thing.

One of the great men of the American Civil War was General O. O. Howard. Not only was he a great man, but he was a good man and beloved by all.

During General Sherman's last campaign in the South General Howard was put in command of a special division. When the war ended, a grand parade of the conquering troops was planned to be held in Washington. Now the man whose place Howard had taken insisted on riding at the head of his former division, and this man's friends were so influential that General Sherman did not see how he could refuse his request.

Before the final arrangements were made, General Sherman sent for General Howard and explained the situation to him. He asked him if he would object to this other general riding at the head of his (Howard's) command, and Howard replied that the division was now his and that he had every right to ride at its head. "That is true," answered Sherman, "but you know you are a Christian, and you don't mind so much." "Oh," replied General Howard, "if that's what you mean, let him ride there, and let him have the honour." "Yes," said the Commander, "let him have the honour; but you will report to me at nine o'clock and ride by my side at the head of the army!"

Boys and girls, when you feel inclined to snap at each other, when you feel inclined to squabble and stand on your rights, remember General Howard, remember Isaac and the herdsmen of Gerar.

CAMOUFLAGE.

She put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck.—Gen. xxvii. 16.

THE war has brought us many new words, and among those which have come to stay is the word "camouflage." A short time ago very few grown-up persons would have been able to tell you what "camouflage" meant, and now most schoolboys could explain it.

In the summer of 1918 I spent a few weeks on the shores of the Moray Firth. Out in the Firth lay a number of American warships, and many of these were camouflaged. They were painted with queer dazzling stripes and splashes. Some of them looked just as if the painter had spilt several pots of different coloured paint over them. Well, you know the reason of these queer decorations. They were put there to protect the ships from the German submarines. When the vessels were painted in that way it was difficult for the submarines to calculate the speed at which they were travelling, or even the direction in which they were moving.

And camouflage was adopted not only on the sea, but also on land. In another part of Scotland I saw a number of aeroplane sheds near the sea-shore. These sheds were painted in shades of brown and yellow and green to imitate the sand-dunes among which they were built. And so it was near the battlefields in France and elsewhere. Gun emplacements, etc., were disguised so as to resemble the surrounding landscape.

But camouflage is much older than the Great War. Those of you who have read Macbeth will remember how Birnam Wood came to Dunsinane.

Macbeth, the murderer of good King Duncan and usurper of his throne, had been told by an evil spirit that he should never be vanquished until Birnam Wood came to Dunsinane. And the murderer thought himself safe, for how could a great forest be uprooted and move from one place to another? But you remember how the prophecy came true. Malcolm, the young son of Duncan, came with an army to lay siege to Macbeth's castle of Dunsinane. And as they passed through Birnam Wood, Malcolm ordered each of his soldiers to hew down a bough and carry it before him so as to conceal the real number of the host.

So you find camouflage in early Scottish history. But camouflage is older still than the days of Macbeth. You find instances of it in the Bible. The first one is the camouflage of Jacob by Rebekah. When Rebekah wished to procure the blessing of the first-born for her favourite younger son she dressed Jacob in Esau's garments and then, because Esau was a rough, hairy man, she took the skins of the kids Jacob had killed and put them on his hands and round his neck. Thus disguised, Jacob went into the presence of his old blind father and received the blessing intended for his elder brother.

Now we may make use of camouflage in everyday life. And I want to speak about two kinds of camouflage that we may use—a good and a bad. We shall take the bad kind first.

1. I have known girls who camouflaged broken dishes so that they might look whole. I have known boys who camouflaged their sums or their home essays so that they might appear to be their own work when they were really copies of somebody else's. I have known tradesmen who camouflaged their goods to look good and genuine when they were only cheap and inferior. But the worst kind of camouflage is when we camouflage ourselves.

There is a Russian fable which tells how two porcelain vases stood side by side at an open window. One vase contained real flowers plucked from the King's garden, the other held artificial flowers. They stood there together in the sun and the breeze, and you could scarcely tell the difference between the real flowers and the unreal. But presently the sky darkened and the rain fell. The raindrops beat in at the window. They refreshed the real flowers and brought out the glory of their blue and yellow and scarlet. But the false flowers became smeared and stained and spoiled.

Just as the sun shone out again a servant entered the room. He looked at the artificial flowers, pulled them out of the vase, and carried them to the rubbish-heap.

So things that are not real, things that pretend to be what they are not, won't stand the test. And it is the same with people.

Do you remember how, in *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice could not quite make out what mustard was? At last she said to the Duchess, "Oh, I know it's a vegetable; it doesn't look like one, but it is." And the Duchess replied, "I quite agree with you. The moral of that is, 'Be what you seem to be.'"

That is splendid advice. "Be what you seem to be." Don't pretend to be what you are not. Don't try to ape somebody else who is really quite different. The best people, the only people who count, admire you far more for what you are, however humble and plain you may be, than for what you pretend to be.

2. But there is a good kind of camouflage too. I wonder what it is? Well there is a camouflage we can all use to make disagreeable things nice, and difficult things easy, and ugly things beautiful. Boys and girls are specially qualified for this kind of camouflage, because they have such splendid imaginations.

There was once a small boy called Teddy who was obliged to take some rather nasty medicine. He used to make an awful fuss about it and he had to get a sweet after it, and a great deal of condoling and consoling into the bargain. But one day he took his dose quite quietly and his mother could not understand the reason. So she said, "You're getting accustomed to it: aren't you, Teddy?"

"Well, not 'xackly," replied Teddy, "but you see, Tom and I used to go to the garden and eat 'sturium seeds and didn't they nip our tongues! Then we went down to the brook and ate wild grapes, and my! weren't they sour! And then we went under the oak trees and chewed acorns, and they were awful bitter! But we didn't mind 'cos we did it all for fun. So you see I'm pertending that I'm taking this nasty stuff for fun and it doesn't seem half so bad." Brave little Teddy! He got his lump of sugar all the same!

Let me tell you one more story. It is related by a great writer of fiction. It is the story of a poor toymaker who had a blind daughter. To keep her from growing sad he pretended that they were very wealthy, that the rooms they lived in were exquisitely furnished, that the old sack he wore for a coat was a costly garment, and that he, who was nearly broken-hearted with care and poverty, was the gayest and happiest of men.

Boys and girls will you try to do a little camouflaging of that sort? It will help you, it will help others, it will make glad the heart of Jesus, who came to earth to bear the burdens of others, to give life and joy to all.

A SHINING STAIRCASE.

Behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. . . . And, behold, the Lord stood above it (RVm 'beside him').—Gen. xxviii. 12, 13.

You know how it is when something you have seen during the day comes into your dreams at night. Only it comes into your dreams in the oddest way, and the most extraordinary things happen in connexion with it. Well, the ladder of this morning's text was like that.

Jacob, poor fellow, had been running away from home all day. He and his brother Esau had had a quarrel. Jacob had played a mean trick on Esau, and Esau was so furious that he had vowed to take Jacob's life. But Jacob's mother determined that she would prevent any such awful tragedy, so she sent off Jacob post haste to visit his uncle Laban. She sent him off in such a hurry that he had nothing but his staff for company.

Jacob walked very fast all day, and when evening came and the stars shone out in the Eastern sky he found himself tired and footsore. His heart was aching as well as his feet, and he was miserably homesick. He found himself in a bare rocky valley, at the foot of a hill which rose in steps or terraces till it seemed to touch the stars. It was a desert spot, but Jacob was too weary to go farther. So he took one of the stones which were lying about, put it under his head for a pillow, and lay down on the bare ground. I've no doubt, grown man though he was, that he wet that pillow with a few tears before he fell asleep.

When he did sleep he had a strange dream. He saw the terraced hillside above him, but instead of being a hillside it was now a shining flight of steps. The Bible uses the word "ladder," but what Jacob saw was more like a long staircase. Step after step it rose till it reached to heaven itself, and lo! his stone pillow was the lowest step of the flight. Up and down this wonderful staircase angels were constantly hurrying, as if they were busy carrying messages from earth to heaven, and back again from heaven to earth. Then Jacob discovered a greater marvel still. Somebody was bending over him, and speaking to him—Somebody who had evidently come down that shining staircase—and suddenly Jacob knew that the Somebody was God Himself.

God spoke to the lonely traveller and made him promises—glorious promises—both for himself and for his children. And Jacob awoke a different man from him who had fallen asleep, for he had seen God and spoken with Him. The staircase of his dreams had brought him into touch with God.

When Sir John Franklin, the famous Arctic explorer, was a little chap, some of his companions were discussing what they should do when they grew up to be men. Each was going to do something grander than the other. At last they came to John. They had all chosen so many fine actions that there seemed nothing left for him. But John was ready with his plan. "When I'm big," said he, "I'm going to build a ladder so high that I shall be able to climb up to heaven." His friends all laughed at him, but we know that though he did not build that ladder he climbed the ladder of fame. He climbed it to its topmost rung when he laid down his life in a frozen land, trying to discover the North-West Passage.

We cannot all climb Sir John Franklin's ladder of fame, but we can all climb Jacob's staircase, for it was a staircase of "intercourse between God and man," which is just a grown-up way of saying it was a staircase of prayer.

Yes, prayer is the staircase by which we can reach God, and by which He also can come down to us. By it we can send our thoughts and wishes up to Him like the angels ascending, and by it He can speak to us. For prayer is not merely our speaking to God; it is also God speaking to us. You will find that out some day when you are specially vexed or worried, and have sent your worries up the shining steps. You will feel, while you pray, as if God had descended by the staircase of your prayer and were bending over you to help and comfort you.

MIZPAH.

Therefore was the name of it called Galeed: and Mizpah, for he said, The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.—Gen. xxxi. 48, 49.

THE sermon to-day is going to be about three things. The first thing is a cairn of stones, the second thing is a ring, and the third is—well, we shall see.

1. We have all seen a cairn of stones—haven't we? In fact some of us may have helped to make one. We may have been for a specially jolly picnic on some hillside, and after tea we may have climbed to the top of the hill. Then one of the company, looking at the loose stones scattered about, has said, "Let us build a cairn in memory of this afternoon!" So everybody has set to work and gathered stones and piled them in a certain spot, till there was quite an imposing heap—a heap big enough to look like a tiny wart on the brow of the hill. And many years after you may pass that way again, and looking up you will exclaim, "There's our cairn! Do you remember that lovely picnic?"

Yes, that is what a cairn is for. It is to make us remember. All cairns—and they are many—

have some story attached to them. They are for remembrance.

Some are to remind us of a battle. If you go to Inverness you will be sure to visit Culloden Moor. There you will see a huge cairn raised in memory of the last battle that took place on British soil, the battle where the Highland clans fought and fell for love of "Bonnie Prince Charlie" and the Stuart cause.

The Culloden cairn is a very tidy solid-looking pile, and in its side is inserted a stone slab with an inscription. It is what we might call a "young" cairn. It has been erected comparatively recently, and that is why it has a slab telling what it commemorates. But the old cairns have no inscription. They are just heaps of rough stones, roughly piled.

Now, our text refers to one of the oldest cairns we know of. It was a great heap of stones with a single huge boulder standing beside it. It bore no inscription, but it had no fewer than three names. It was raised by two men, and the first man called it "Jegar-sahadutha," and the second man called it "Galeed"—both of which names just mean "a heap of witness." Then a third name was added to these two. It was called "Mizpah," which means "a watch-post." And that brings me to the second part of the sermon.

2. Most of you have seen the word *Mizpah.* Where? Oh! on a ring! Yes, a plain gold ring with the letters carved round it. You asked the

meaning of the word, and the person who wore the ring told you that it meant, "The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another." And very likely the same person explained how the ring had been given to her—for it is usually "her"—by a very dear friend who was going far away, and who wanted her to remember that though they were to be so separated and could not take care of each other God was watching over them both, and He would let no harm befall. You felt that was rather a fine idea and that a Mizpah ring was more interesting than one with merely stones in it.

But though people have taken that beautiful meaning out of the word "Mizpah," that is not what the two men who set up the first Mizpah meant by it. What they intended Mizpah to say to them was, "The Lord watch that neither of us does anything unfair to the other."

You see Laban and Jacob had lived by taking advantage of each other for many years. First Laban had cheated Jacob, and then Jacob had paid back Laban in his own coin, and so it had gone on until both of them were tired of it. So they agreed that they would make a bargain never to deal unfairly by each other again. And as a seal to the promise they built their cairn—their Mizpah. If they were ever tempted to break that promise the remembrance of the cairn and the thought that they had called God as witness to the bargain would check them.

Did they ever need their Mizpah? So far as we know they never did. But that brings me to the third point of the sermon.

3. And the third thing I want to speak to you about is your own special private Mizpah. You didn't know you had one? But you have. It is neither a cairn nor a ring. In fact it is not anything you can see, but it is there all the same. God gave it to you, and unless you wilfully destroy it, it will be the witness to all your promises, the seal to all your bargains, the guide-post at many a cross-road of your life.

What is your Mizpah? Surely it is your sense of honour. If you have a sense of honour you need no heap of stones to prevent you from cheating or tricking another. If you have a sense of honour you will break neither a bargain nor a promise. If you have a sense of honour you will scorn to take advantage of enemy or friend. If you have a sense of honour you will do even more than you promised rather than risk not fulfilling your bargain.

They tell of Nelson, when he was a boy, that he and his brother were returning to school after the Christmas holidays. Their home was within riding distance of the school and it was their custom to return on horseback. Now it happened this Christmas that there had been a heavy snow-storm. And by and by the boys determined to turn back rather than go on. Nelson's brother William was not fond of school, so he welcomed any excuse. But when the boys got home and told their story, all their father said was, "If that be the case you certainly shall not go; but make another attempt and I shall leave it to your honour. If the road is dangerous you may return; but, remember boys, I leave it to your honour."

So the two boys started out again. They found the snow really deep, and once more William was for turning back, but Horatio said, "No, we must go on. We can manage it if we try harder. Father left it to our honour."

That was the boy who afterwards hoisted the famous signal, "England expects every man to do his duty."

Boys and girls, God expects every one of us to do our duty by each other. That is why He gives us a sense of honour as our remembrancer—our Mizpah.

THE MAKING OF A GREAT MAN.

They took him, and cast him into the pit.—Gen. xxxvii. 24.

I WAS reading the other day about a curious custom which has been adopted by the American deep-sea fishermen.

In order to have their fish nice and fresh for the market they keep them alive in a tank until they are required.

Now there is one kind of fish which this sort of treatment does not suit. It is the codfish. The codfish is accustomed to a hard life. If it is taken away from the troubles of the ocean, which make it swift and strong, it becomes soft and flabby and listless.

When the fishermen used to put codfish into the tank they lay at the bottom and took life easy, and soon they were of little value in the market. Then one man had a brilliant idea. The codfish has an enemy called the catfish, and this man thought he would try the plan of putting a catfish in the tank. It worked beautifully. Whenever a codfish was just settling down for a nice snooze the catfish got up and chased it round the tank. The codfish had hard work dodging their old enemy. The exercise made them nimble and firm, and they came to market in good condition.

You may ask what a catfish and a codfish have to do with Joseph being put into a pit—or rather a cistern, for it was a disused cistern, shaped like a bottle with a narrow mouth, into which his brothers cast him. You may wonder what that story of the fish has to do with Joseph. Well just this. Joseph was in many respects a very fine boy. He had high ideals and great sweetness of nature. But he had faults and weaknesses too. He was a tell-tale, he was a dreamer, and his father spoilt him. You can picture what kind of man he would have turned out if he had been left to grow up in his home. I can fancy his exaggerating these tales by and by and adding little bits of his own; for he was a boy with imagination. I can picture him dreaming his life away without doing much good to anybody. I can imagine Jacob's coddling him and petting him till he had little manhood left. He might have remained nothing better than a dreamer and a tale-bearer if he hadn't been put down into that cistern and afterwards sold to the Ishmaelites. The hard trials he endured brought out the best that was in him.

Now, you boys and girls have to submit to discipline too. You have to do things you don't like, and you are not allowed to do others that you do like. You have to get up in the morning and go to school, you have to be punctual, you have to be neat and tidy, you have to learn your lessons, you have to obey rules.

And sometimes you feel like saying, "Bother, what's the use of it all? Why can't I do as I please?" And then you have your difficulties, and disappointments too, and you sometimes wonder what good they do.

Well, all these things are there just to make fine men and women of you, if you only know how to take them.

A distinguished student wrote to a friend after a defeat in an examination—"I ought to be thankful for the defeat, and I hope sometimes I am, because it lowered my pride."

All our life, even to the smallest detail, is planned by God. Nothing happens to us without good reason. And if we meet our defeats and disappointments and the little things that irk us in the right spirit, then we too may become great and noble like Joseph.

A MAN WHO FORGOT.

Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him.—Gen. xl. 23.

Some boys and girls—very likeable ones too—have a habit of forgetting things.

I believe that as a boy Pharaoh's chief butler was a great favourite. He would constantly be forgetting his promises. His schoolfellows could not help liking him all the same. He drew their secrets out of them—they could not tell how; they called him "a jolly good sort."

When he grew to be a man, we know that he went to be a servant at the royal palace. He became a favourite with his master Pharaoh too. But we may be sure that he still had his old habit of forgetting. I really think the story of how he got thrown into prison was a story of forgetting things. He forgot once too often, and Pharaoh was angry.

As it happened, the prison he was sent to was in charge of a Hebrew lad who, though in charge, was himself a prisoner. He was very different in temperament from the Egyptians. Joseph was like a musical instrument. Have you ever been in a room where there was a violin lying in its case near a piano? If you had put your ear close to the violin case when the piano was being played, and had listened very, very carefully, you would have heard a gentle echo. The violin was thrilling all over. Joseph was glad when the prisoners were glad, and sorry when they were sorry.

He was constantly trying to do them good turns, and he made some friends among them. One of these was Pharaoh's chief butler. He noticed one morning that the butler and another prisoner—the chief baker—were looking very sad. When he asked the chief butler why he was so sad, the man replied that he had dreamed a dream, and no one could tell him what it meant. Then Joseph said, "God interprets dreams for me; tell me yours." "You will soon be back in Pharaoh's Palace again," he prophesied when the dream had been related to him.

The butler was made a very happy man indeed, and the two had a talk together. "Have me in thy remembrance when it shall be well with thee," Joseph said; "and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house." The butler promised, and when he said "good-bye" to Joseph on the morning of his release, it just seemed to mean—It's not "good-bye," for I'll soon see you again.

For a while after that, Joseph went about among the prisoners counting the days till he should have his freedom. But the days became weeks, the weeks became months, the months years. The butler forgot all about his Hebrew friend.

"It was a low down trick," you say. I cannot help agreeing with you; yet, boys and girls, it is wonderfully easy to get into the butler's ways. "Oh, I forgot! I must do something for that Hebrew prisoner"—we can imagine him saying every evening for about a week—"I'll speak to Pharaoh to-morrow." He did not speak to Pharaoh; he forgot, and went on forgetting.

It was two years afterwards, when the king wanted someone to interpret a dream for him, that the butler suddenly said, "Oh, I remember!" There and then he told the king about Joseph, and Joseph was sent for at last.

It was Pharaoh that made the butler think of Joseph at all. Joseph was clean out of his mind, and I believe would have remained so, but for the fact that he wanted to please his master and he had never known of anyone who could interpret dreams as the young Hebrew prisoner did. You see he had not felt any real gratitude for Joseph's help.

When a man forgets favours received, and the promises he made when in trouble, we call it ingratitude. Boys and girls, ingratitude is a thing that hurts. The greatest of English poets wrote about it—

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
Thou dost not bite so nigh
  As benefits forgot:
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
  As friend remembered not.

"As friend remembered not." That gives the cruellest sting.

A young student when he was leaving for the University, which was at some distance from his home, promised to bring his little sister a copy of *Andersen's Fairy Tales.* "I'll be back at Christmas; I'll bring it then," he said. His people were quite poor, so his little sister had very few story-books. She kept thinking every day about the *Fairy Tales*, and when it came near to Christmas, a very common question that she asked her mother was, "Mother, will it have pictures?" The night before her brother was expected she scarcely slept any, and she was up by six o'clock in the morning.

"My book's in Tom's box," she whispered to her mother when she saw him come off the railway train. He hasn't got it in his hand. Mother, I'm just awfully happy!" Tom must have his tea. "My book, Tom," the little girl said after tea was finished. "Your book? What book?" Tom had forgotten. That night the little sister sobbed herself to sleep.

Don't we all sometimes forget friends who have done a great deal for us? What about our fathers and mothers? I'm afraid we forget them oftener than "sometimes." But there is no friend who is oftener forgotten than Jesus Christ. Boys and girls forget Him in the morning; they run to school without having said their prayers. They are in such a hurry dressing before breakfast, and afterwards they are busy looking for their lesson books. Half-way they remember and promise themselves—"I'll say them at the dinner hour." Who among you has not said something like that, and then just forgotten again?

Many a sad story can be told about forgetting, and those stories all begin so simply and naturally that they are just like a bit out of a boy's or a girl's life. But Joseph *remembered*, and your fathers and mothers can tell you that *God never forgets.*

WHAT A RING MAY MEAN.

Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand.—Gen. xli. 42.

RINGS are the most old-fashioned things in the world. They were worn thousands and thousands of years ago, and yet they are as fashionable to-day as ever. Why? Perhaps the chief reason is that rings have generally been worn as the sign of something. There has generally been some special meaning attached to the wearing of them. Let us have a look at the meaning of some of these old rings this morning.

1. A ring sometimes means *authority.* The first finger-ring mentioned in the Bible was a ring of authority. It is the ring of our text.

In ancient times, when very few could write, it was the custom for a man who was in any position of authority to wear a ring with some special badge or design. This signet ring was used to seal letters or documents. It was used to show that the person in authority really had given the orders contained in the letters or documents. If that person was a king and handed over his signet ring to another it meant that this other, when he used the ring, had all the power and authority of the king himself. So you see it was a tremendous honour for Joseph to be given Pharaoh's own signet ring.

In Egypt, in earliest times, signet rings such as that of Pharaoh were very much worn. You can see some of these old rings to-day, for they have been dug up out of the Egyptian tombs and ruins. They are usually of pure gold. They are heavy and massive, but their design is simple. What jewellers call the "bezel"—the flat bit which bears the design—is oblong, and on it are deeply graven the name and title of the owner.

But it was not only in ancient Egypt that the ring of authority was known. It was worn also in ancient Rome. There only ambassadors were granted the right to wear a gold ring. This right was called the *jus annuli aurei.* Later it was extended to other officers of the state, and by and by the soldiers and the free citizens of the great republic were allowed to share the coveted privilege of wearing a gold ring.

But we have rings of authority to-day. A Bishop's ring is the sign of his authority as a Bishop. In early days the Bishop's ring was of plain gold. Later it came to be set with a sapphire. The early rings were very large, for they were intended to be worn on the fore-finger of the right hand over the glove. The Bishop's ring was considered so much his that it was buried with him.

Then the reigning Pope has a famous ring of authority. Its form is always the same. It is a ring with a device of the apostle Peter in a boat drawing a net from the water. So it is known as "the fisherman's ring." When a Pope dies his ring is broken. Then when a new Pope is elected a new ring with a blank for the name is brought into the Conclave (that is, the council which has just elected him). It is placed on the finger of the newly-made Pope. He then declares what name he intends to take, and hands back the ring that the name may be engraved on it.

2. A ring sometimes means *slavery.*

During the days of the later Roman Empire an iron ring was the mark of a slave. It meant that he was not his own master, he was somebody's property.

Some of you have read *Ivanhoe.* Do you remember the serf's ring there? Only it was not a ring for the finger. It was a brass ring like a dog's collar soldered fast round the man's neck. You remember that on it was the inscription, "Gurth, the son of Beowulph, is the born thrall of Cedric of Rotherwood."

And a ring can mean slavery still. Some years ago a little Indian lady came to pay a visit to this country. She was married, and her hostess asked her why she did not wear a wedding ring. "I do," she answered. "I will show it to you." She raised her *sari* and showed, far up on her arm, what looked like a very strong golden hoop. "It is gold on the top," said she, "but it is iron underneath. When I was married this ring was welded on to my arm. It will never be taken off in this life; it will remain on when I am dead."

Boys and girls, do you know anything like that strange wedding ring? I do. Its name is sin. Sin generally seems so pleasant to begin with. It is the golden hoop. But it holds with the strength of iron. We cannot free ourselves from it. God alone can break its band.

3. But *a ring oftenest means love.*

That is the meaning of your mother's wedding ring. It signifies a pledge or promise that will not be broken, a love that hopes to be as endless as the ring itself. For you can go round and round a wedding ring, but you will never come to an end of it. And, because it means love, such a ring is the most sacred and beautiful and precious of all rings. The rarest of sapphires and diamonds and emeralds cannot compare with it in value, although it is only a little circlet of plain gold. An engagement ring means love too. So does the ring which we call a mourning ring, for it is worn in memory of someone loved and lost.

Are there no rings of love in the Bible? There is one in particular. Do you know where to find it? You will find it in the story of the Prodigal Son. You remember how the prodigal's father welcomed him and called for the robe and the shoes and the ring. These were not necessary articles of clothing. They were special marks of honour. The young fellow had come back daring to hope only for the position of a servant. But the father gave him the best that was in the house. He did more than merely forgive him. He showered on him the gifts of love.

And that is God's way still, boys and girls. We may be wearing the iron ring of slavery to sin. If we go to Him and ask Him to loose it, He will not only do so, He will not only forgive, He will welcome us with rejoicing and the golden ring of love.

THE CLIMBERS.

God hath made me forget all my toil.—Gen. xli. 51.

IN the city of Edinburgh there are a great many very high houses. In one of these lives an old lady. To reach her little top flat from one particular street you have to climb a stair of a hundred and five steps. You would probably run up all the way, sometimes taking two or three steps at a time, and at the top not feel one bit tired.

One of her young friends, up for the first time, looked all round her room, then out at the window. "I like this," he said—"a rare place for an aeroplane station!" Another—she was a girl—visited her one night after it was dark. There was no light in the room, but down below were the lights of the city, and they twinkled, twinkled, just like so many stars. "How lovely!" the girl said. "It makes me think of Peter Pan's house up in the tree-tops." But often the old lady's grown-up friends arrive quite out of breath. They have to rest before beginning to talk. While they are resting the old lady encourages them to look out at her windows, for then they are almost certain to say—"It's worth the trouble of climbing up." I must tell you that her "best" room has three windows, and each one looks in a different direction.

You want to know, of course, what is to be seen from these windows. Well, just down below and all round is part of the north side of the city with its ups and downs—for Edinburgh is not flat; in the middle distance one can see the Forth and the coast of Fife; and beyond that are hills behind hills. And then there is the sky, the glorious sky.

It is a very long time ago since men discovered that hard work brought reward. "God hath made me forget all my toil." These were Joseph's words. You know the wonderful story of his life, and how he climbed up, and up, until he became a very great man in Egypt. Yet, old though the story is, our text, "God hath made me forget all my toil," might have been recorded as among the fireside reflections of a great and God-fearing business man of to-day. And I believe that Joseph himself, when he was a boy like some of you, felt all the more determined to succeed with every rebuff that came to him. How many of you have learnt that lesson?

I remember a little fellow—this happened before any of you were born—who competed for a prize in elementary Greek. His rival was very clever—much cleverer than he was—so he rose early and sat up late in his eagerness to come in first. He gained the prize. When he saw it, for a moment his heart sank. It was an old second-hand Greek New Testament. The boys then did not get such grand prizes as you do.

But I think I see that boy's face when his father stroked his hair and said, "Spur on, you'll be a scholar yet, George."

George was in dead earnest. But there are those who climb—who work—for mere sport or, like the old lady's "Peter Pan" visitor, in order that they may find pretty things. No happier boys are to be found than those who love good honest sport; and no happier girl than the girl who has begun to love pictures. But in your happiness, don't *forget*. For the great climb of your inner life—the one that is in our minds—needs your attention, not only every day, but every hour.

When I decided on to-day's text I said to myself, "I'll tell the boys and girls how our brave soldiers won battles in the Great War. It is a story of lads being confronted with danger and death and triumphing over them. In their case climbing meant paying a great price for victory, but it was worth the trouble. They smiled at Death and refused to be afraid. The words of the old hymn take a new meaning:

> A noble army, men and boys,
> The matron and the maid,
> Around the Saviour's throne rejoice,
> In robes of light arrayed;
> They climbed the steep ascent of heaven
> Through peril, toil and pain.

"God has made me forget all my toil," we can imagine them saying. "It was worth the trouble of climbing up."

A STOREHOUSE OF PICTURES.

And Joseph remembered.—Gen. xlii. 9.

THERE once lived in Edinburgh a little boy about six years old who was a great deal with his mother because he was not strong enough to go to the infant school. They were plain, homely people.

One day, a very thin severe-looking woman came to visit them; and Jim, sitting on a little stool, kept looking up at her, for he thought he had never seen anyone sit up so straight on a chair. After a little, he ventured a question: "Are you lonely?" The woman just laughed. Jim persisted, "Do you live alone? . . . Have you a sister?" . . . Have you a husband?" The idea of loneliness in old age had entered Jim's mind, and I believe he went about thinking of this woman all day. He was not old enough to know of the wonderful possession she had. She did not need to be lonely. She owned a palace of her very own. She had pictures of all kinds—of childhood, schooldays, young womanhood, and of ever so many people whom she used to know. Perhaps she had pictures of green fields too, and could even smell their beautiful wild-flowers. Then she could hear an old song if she wanted to—

Music when soft voices die
Vibrates in the memory.

I know that you have already guessed that I speak of the things we can remember—of Memory. I wish you boys and girls could understand what a marvellous thing memory is, and how good God is in letting us have it. It is a *secret* palace, open only to the person who owns it.

Now, while Joseph was in the palace of Pharaoh he had his secret palace too; in it were the pictures of his father and his brothers, of the fields of Hebron, of Shechem, and of Dothan. He entered his secret palace often, for those pictures meant a great deal to him in the land of Egypt. I believe some of them would make him feel rather sad, particularly those in which he himself appeared; for when he was a boy Joseph was inclined to forget that there were other people in the world besides himself.

One day, during the famine, his three brothers came to Egypt to buy corn. Joseph recognized them at once, but they did not know him. Even while he was speaking to them, the real Joseph was away among his pictures of Hebron and Dothan. Strange as it may seem, the sight of them stirred feelings of love in his heart, love even to those brothers who had treated him so unkindly. And the love made him act in a very strange sort of way. He spoke roughly to the men, and accused them of being spies. But as soon as their backs were turned he went and wept just like a child.

Boys and girls, you have a collection of pictures already; and every day you add to it. Your memory is a wonderful storehouse of pictures, and what these are depends on how you live. One day you say a cruel thing to some one and forget it. But at night—or it may be months after—all the circumstances appear as a picture. How it hurts to look at it! A famous writer has said, "Memory is the only paradise from which we cannot be driven." But it is not always a paradise. Some people would give all they possess to be able to forget.

How, then, are we to have pictures that make us happy? We can try to be kind and thoughtful and gentle to those about us, and then we shall have a storehouse of happy memories. So ask God to fill you with the spirit of Jesus, the spirit of love. He will help you to live a life that will have only beautiful memories.

HEATHER HONEY.

Take . . . a little honey.—Gen. xliii. 11.

You like honey, don't you? Up hands those who don't! Honey is very sweet—so sweet that a little of it goes a long way. It is Nature's jam. And old mother Nature, who never does things scrimpily, has given the world a plentiful supply of her jam. Honey is the common produce of the world. The flowers and plants of all lands produce it. Canaan "flows" with it. It is said that in England there is heather enough for all the bees in the world. As for Scotland! the heather there is so beautiful and so abundant that Scottish poets have written about it again and again. And "Heather honey is the best"—any grocer will tell you that.

1. Now, what did Jacob mean by sending, among various other things, a little honey to the governor of Egypt? It was an act of courtesy, of politeness—something to sweeten the ordinary dealings of life.

All round about us Nature sweetens things for us. She gives us sunshine, flowers, beautiful scenery, delicious summer breezes. Sweetening, in fact, meets us at every turn. But, strange to say, although we all get so much of it, we often give very little in return. It is a great pity; for a little honey—a little politeness or courtesy—goes a long way. It helps a man to make his way in the world. It makes things more pleasant for everybody. We can work wonders with just a little honey.

An old lady was once recalling the things that she remembered best about her childhood. What do you think she recalled most clearly? It was a day when she was dressing her dolls and her little sister asked her innocently, as little sisters will, what she was doing. She answered snappily, "That's a secret!" and turned her back. Poor little sister did not snap back, "You ought to tell me, I'm your sister." Instead she said gently, "If you like I'll help you." "I had only the grace," said the old lady, "to answer gruffly, 'Thank you.' But I have never forgotten my little sister's gentle reply. It has stayed with me all these sixty years. It has often kept me from bad temper, and it has prompted me to do many little kindnesses in life."

2. Heather honey is the best—not the honey that is gathered from cultivated flowers, but what the bees bring from the hillside. And the politeness of Nature—the politeness that is just a reflection of the real boy or girl—is the honey we should like children to offer.

Carlyle, the Scottish philosopher, was a very great man as you know. Scotland is proud of him to-day. He was the most natural of men. But even the best of his friends would not have hesitated to say that he would have been even greater had he, in dealing with his friends, taken a little honey with him. He, of all men, was one who would have offered only genuine "heather honey." The pity was he didn't do it.

3. Most of Joseph's brothers had rough natures. Any gentleness they had was driven into them by the experiences of life. But their father was of another mould. The honey Joseph's brothers took down to Egypt they got in their father's house.

And we want to see in you boys and girls the politeness or courtesy that you get from being in the company of your Heavenly Father. Some one has said, "Love, and do as you like." That is true of loving Jesus Christ, for if you love Him, you will never be rude. Your gentleness and courtesy will be of the kind that comes from the heart—the genuine "heather honey."

A FATHER'S HEART.

His life is bound up in the lad's life.—Gen. xliv. 30.

"MY FATHER!" You speak the words carelessly. You never think what they really mean. To you "father" is perhaps the one who is at the head of things, the one who goes out to business all day and comes home tired at night, the one who is master in the house and whose word is law. You love him, but you are just a little afraid of him. You feel you don't know him so well as you know your mother. If you are in trouble it is to her, not to him, that you go.

Of course there are exceptions to this rule. There are some of you to whom the word "father" is just another way of spelling the word "love." The bond that unites you is so close that you feel your father is more to you and you are more to your father than words can ever tell. But I am not speaking of the exceptions to-day. I am speaking of the general rule. And the general rule is that there is for you a touch of fear and mystery in your love for your father.

You have heard of Carlyle, the great writer? He was a man who lived to learn, and to think; for his greatest joy in life was getting to know things. As a boy Thomas Carlyle had a father whom he feared, a father of whom indeed the whole family were afraid. You would have been afraid of him too. But, all the time, the Carlyle family honoured their father above any man in the whole world. And when Thomas Carlyle became a man he learnt to love him too. The great philosopher realized that, in a mysterious way, his father's life was knit to his.

After his father's death, Carlyle wrote—"My early, yet not my earliest recollections of my father, had in them a certain awe; which only now, or very lately, has passed into reverence. . . . All that belongs to him has become very precious to me. . . . I can remember his carrying me across Mein Water. . . . Perhaps I was in my fifth year. . . . It was the loveliest summer evening I recollect. . . . He lifted me against his thigh with his right hand, and walked carelessly along till we were over. My face was turned downwards. I looked into the water and its reflected skies, with terror yet with confidence that he could save me."

When you grow older you will wonder at the strange things you will find out about people. You will one day make discoveries about your own father.

The other day I read a story of how a little girl discovered her father. She was the daughter of a famous French painter. Though she had lived with her father all her life she had never really seen him, for she had lost her sight when she was a baby. But she loved him very dearly, and he was her constant companion, for her mother was dead.

One day a clever doctor saw the child and said that he could cure her blindness by performing an operation. How happy and excited the little girl was at the thought of being able to see! And what made her happiest was the thought that at last she would look upon her father. When the operation was successfully over and the bandages were removed from her eyes, she ran to him and looked up trembling in his face. Then she shut her eyes and felt his face all over with her little fingers to make sure it was that of her loved companion. Then she opened her eyes again and gazed and gazed, and then, holding him tightly by the hand, she cried, "Only to think I had this splendid father so many years, and never knew him!"

Boys and girls, you may have known as little about your father's heart as that little girl did about her father's face. You may one day discover its love as the blind child discovered her father's features. The love is there; for the story of our text—the story of Jacob's love for his son Benjamin—is the story of how most fathers love their children, though their children may grow up and never suspect it. Your father's life, boys and girls, is bound up in your life.

But you have a Father in Heaven as well as a father on earth, and the same is equally true of Him. We know that because Jesus came to earth to tell us so. Till Jesus came men feared God as much as they loved Him. They did not know Him properly. But Jesus came to discover the Father, to show to man God's great warm heart beating with love for all His children.

And since then men have found it easy to love God because they know Christ and God are One.

So never be afraid of your Heavenly Father. He loves you more tenderly than the most tender human father. He understands and sympathizes with all your troubles and difficulties. He is always waiting to comfort and help you. Boys and girls—the sooner the better—discover Him.

GETTING THE PERSPECTIVE.

God sent me before you to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance.—Gen. xlv. 6, 7.

MANY of you are learning to draw, and you have often heard the word "perspective." Perspective is the art of drawing so that things appear to have their natural dimensions. Thus, if you draw a house you must do it so that your drawing makes it appear square or otherwise, like the real house. Before beginning you don't allow your eye to rest specially on the door, or the windows, or the chimney—that would give you a lopsided picture; you take a view of the whole building. If you go up to the top of a high hill, you see the surrounding country in perspective. A person who really wants to get a true idea of the city of Edinburgh does not spend all his time wandering about the old closes, interesting though they may be; if he is a wise man, he goes up to the Castle or to Arthur's Seat, and gazes down upon the whole city.

There is such a thing as getting the perspective in life. Joseph got it. He attained to a very high position in Egypt; and to a man who had simply come from a family of shepherds there was surely a temptation to look round on his grandeur and say, "This is Life! Away yonder in Hebron I was not in my true sphere. And those men who ill-used me! They were brutal and cruel; they were not sons of *my* mother; they were but half-brothers."

Instead of that, Joseph looked all round on life; and he looked at the sky. When his brothers stood before him and quailed at the simple words, "I am Joseph whom ye sold into Egypt," he said, "Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for *God* did send me before you to preserve life. . . . God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance." The brothers had no outlook; they were face to face only with their own misdeeds, and very unhappy. But Joseph had the true perspective. He could see God's guiding hand in all that had happened to him.

Boys and girls, you are young. It is not natural that, like men and women, you should be able to look back and see life in perspective. What does life mean for the most of you? It means a great deal that is very happy—football, cricket, the playground. To a few of you, besides these things, it means the joy of getting knowledge. But did you ever think of how much in life you ignore? There are things near you, and things far off that you never turn your eyes to look at.

A great man, in his old age, told a friend that he was awakened to the realities of life by a terrible fall.

When he was quite a young boy, he had a habit of sliding down the stair railing. One day he overbalanced himself, fell to the ground, and was nearly killed. During the illness that followed, he was often reminded of the big things of life. He saw them all round him. He realized God. He sought Him. He found Him. And when—as an old man—he died, the whole world mourned his loss because he had been wise and good—like Joseph. As a boy Joseph thought a good deal about himself. He was full of his dreams. People nowadays would have called him a self-centred lad. But one crushing blow after another came to his feelings. He took the lessons from his life, however, and learned. Experience made him the man of wonderful goodness and wisdom who said to his poor, bewildered brothers, "I am Joseph."

Long ago, there were men who lived beside Jesus Christ. They were His disciples, and they loved Him. While He was on earth they thought only of the present, they were so happy. But Jesus Christ was crucified and buried. It was very, very difficult for those men to think of life without their Master. A few hours on the cross, and then death. How it must have perplexed them! But those few hours mean more than anything else in the world now. We see them in their true perspective. The cross, which was thought to be the symbol of shame, has come to be the symbol of a great and deep joy.

Boys and girls, that cross of Christ must be in your lives too, or they will be sadly out of perspective. It is only when you realize that Jesus loved you and died for you that life gains its true meaning, that life becomes worth living. Then life's crosses, its worries and its woes, will fall into their places in the vanishing point of the distance; and the foreground will be filled with the love and joy which the cross of Jesus brings.

YOUR OCCUPATION.

What is your occupation?—Gen. xlvii. 3.

WHAT is your occupation? "Oh!" you say, "I haven't got an occupation yet. Father has, of course, but I must wait till I am a little older before I have one." Well, if you will excuse my contradicting you so flatly, I should like to say that you are quite mistaken. You have an occupation already, not one only, but several.

Not so very long ago a boy of twelve went to the Post Office Savings Bank to deposit a little money. The girl behind the counter handed him a form on which he had to write his name and his address. There was also a space marked "occupation," so he filled it in "schoolboy," and he was very angry when the girl behind the counter smiled.

Now, I think that schoolboy was quite right. Being a schoolboy *was* his occupation, and if he was putting his whole heart into it, it was just as important an occupation as any. We all have an occupation at that rate. Mother's is making a home and looking after your comfort, and a very hard occupation it is sometimes, though she doesn't grumble about it. Even baby has his occupation. He is busy learning to speak and to walk, and that is a highly important occupation.

But I am to go a step farther, and to tell you that your occupation is just whatever you may be doing at the moment. All the hours of your life are occupied somehow. Are you working? That's an occupation. Are you playing? That's an occupation. Are you sleeping? That's an occupation. Are you doing nothing? That's an occupation. Now let us have a look at some of these occupations.

1. What about the last—doing nothing? That is often the hardest occupation of all, and the most tiring, and the most miserable. When you are going about bored and yawning, with your hands in your pockets, when you are trying to kill time and it won't kill, you are least happy. The life which is all one long holiday is not to be envied. Of course, I don't mean that you shouldn't rest sometimes. You should. The kind of occupation I'm running down is idleness, not rest.

In Holland in olden times they had a capital way of curing idleness. When an able-bodied man who was fit for work was found begging he was seized and put into a pit. A tap of water was then turned on, and a steady stream of water was directed into the pit. But in the pit there was a pump, and if the man liked he could keep the water from rising and drowning him by working the pump. If he didn't he would certainly be drowned. Of course he chose to work the pump, and the experience taught him a lesson he never forgot. It's a pity there are not more of these pits and pumps around. Some of us would be none the worse of an hour or two of them.

2. Idleness is bad, but I'm sorry to say it leads to a worse occupation—the occupation called "doing evil." In a certain prison a list was kept of the trades which the prisoners had followed before they were taken there. Do you know the result? Out of one hundred names ninety had written opposite them the words "of no occupation." They say that Satan is busy looking out for idle people. They are his best servants. Don't let him count you among the band of idlers whom he turns into evil-doers.

3. I am not going to say anything about the occupations of sleeping and playing, except that I hope you have plenty of both, and that when you play you play fair and make a good loser, for that is even finer than being a good winner.

4. I want to speak of what should be our biggest occupation—our work. That is an occupation everyone should have, even though he be born a millionaire. It is being suggested—I hope it will come to pass—that every boy and girl should learn a trade at school, a trade, not an accomplishment such as playing the piano or painting. These too, but a real trade as well. That is what the Jews did in the days of the New Testament. That is how St. Paul was a tent-maker. Very likely he was a lawyer as well, but he had learned the trade of tent-making as a boy at school, and when

he had to earn some money to keep himself he wasn't ashamed to make tents.

And that brings me to the second remark I wish to make about work. It is this.—No one should ever be ashamed of doing honest work, however humble it may be. Some folk—foolish folk they are!—think certain jobs are not good enough or fine enough for them. They turn up their noses at the idea of keeping a shop, or sweeping a floor, or cleaning the pavements. Such people are not only foolish, they are actually wicked. No one should despise work which is honest. The only thing to be ashamed of is work that is dishonest or badly done. That is the *only* work that is lowering or degrading to the worker. God put us into the world to work, and He made toil honourable, and never said that one occupation was higher than another. Let me tell you a story.

During the American War of Independence some soldiers were engaged in moving a pile of timber which was required for some military purpose. It was heavy work, and they were short-handed, but the sergeant in command stood by and merely looked on. A plainly-dressed officer came up, and remarking that another hand was needed, asked the idle man why he gave no help. "Oh, I'm the sergeant," was the reply in a tone which meant, "*I'm* much too good for work like that." The new-comer said nothing, but he stripped off his coat, worked with a will, and soon put the business through. Then as he pulled on his coat again he turned to the sergeant and said, "When next you're in a difficulty and want an extra hand, send for the Commander-in-Chief." That Commander-in-Chief was George Washington, the liberator of the American colonies.

Boys and girls, would you rather have been the sergeant or the Commander-in-Chief? I know which *I* would rather have been. I know which I'd rather you should be, and I know also which Christ expects you to be.

SECOND FIDDLE.

He also shall be great: howbeit his younger brother shall be greater than he.—Gen. xlviii. 19.

THERE is a beautiful story near the end of Genesis which tells how Jacob blessed Joseph's two boys—Manasseh and Ephraim.

Jacob was old and frail, and he knew that his end could not be far off. Word came to Joseph that his father was ill and he took Manasseh and Ephraim with him to say "Good-bye" to their grandfather and to receive his blessing.

Jacob was delighted to have his favourite son with him, and he told Joseph that Ephraim and Manasseh were to count as his own sons—they were to take their place with Reuben and Judah and the rest. Any other boys that Joseph might have he could keep, but these two were to be Jacob's own.

Then Joseph brought the boys to Jacob to receive his blessing. He took one in either hand and he placed Manasseh, the elder, in the place of honour at Jacob's right hand, and Ephraim, the younger, at his left hand. But Jacob crossed his hands, and he laid his right on Ephraim and his left on Manasseh.

Now Joseph knew that his father's eyes were dim with age, and he thought he had made a mistake. So he lifted Jacob's right hand off Ephraim's head and tried to lay it on Manasseh's; and he told his father that Manasseh was the elder. But the old man refused to alter. "I know it," he said, "I know it: he also shall be great: howbeit his younger brother shall be greater than he."

And so it came to pass. Ephraim became the strongest among the tribes and the foremost in leadership, and in later days "Ephraim" was practically another name for Israel.

Now I wonder if any of you know what it is to be beaten by a younger brother or sister, I wonder if you know what it is to be beaten by *any* of your brothers or sisters. If you do, you will be able to sympathize with Manasseh. It is a hard experience. It is difficult to bear it and at the same time keep sweet and generous and free from jealousy. You plod away and wrestle with your difficulties, and then your brilliant brother comes along and in a very few minutes accomplishes what you have been struggling for hours to do.

And if you haven't any specially clever brothers and sisters, at least most of you know what it is to be beaten at school. You learn your lessons faithfully, but somehow you are always just about the middle of the class. Some brilliant boy at the top goes off with all the prizes.

Now if that is your experience, you have a big temptation to face. And the temptation is to give up trying altogether. You never do much good, you say, so what's the use of striving when somebody else can do the thing so much better without trying at all. It's no fun playing second fiddle.

Now I want to tell you a story. It isn't about a fiddle, but it is about a piccolo, which is a small wind instrument something like a flute.

The great musician, Sir Michael Costa, was one day conducting an orchestra of several hundred performers. Suddenly he missed something, and he called out—"Where is the piccolo?" The piccolo-player had thought that in that great volume of sound his silence would never be noticed, and he had stopped playing for one moment. But the trained ear of the master musician missed his music at once.

And God will miss your music too, if you refuse to play. God needs His "second fiddles." He has a place for them and a great work for them to do. The world is largely made up of "second fiddles," and we couldn't get on without them. We need our geniuses, but we need our plodders too.

If you lay down your fiddle and refuse to play because you are only playing second, then you are selfish and a coward. But if you go on bravely playing second, because God has need of you and it is the work He asks you to do, then some day you may get a surprise and awake to find yourself a hero.

STABILITY.

Unstable as water.—Gen. xlix. 4.

Most of you know the meaning of the word "unstable." "Stable" means reliable, firm, or constant; and a boy or girl who is "unstable" lacks these good qualities. What does the word "stable" remind you of? It reminds me of something very unlike boys and girls—Aberdeen granite. If you visit Aberdeen, you will notice that the houses are very white and plain: there is little or no ornamentation upon them. Instead of that, straight lines are the principal feature. In other big cities flowers, figures, or beautiful tracery are carved on many of the large buildings. Granite, however, is too hard a stone to carve easily. It is beautiful, but it suggests not so much beauty as stability—something that is thoroughly reliable. And all over the world a good Aberdonian is supposed to be firm and reliable, just like his native granite.

Outward beauty, although it is a precious thing, does not always mean perfection. Once an architect designed a great railway bridge that was supposed to combine lightness with strength. When at last it was built, people were very proud of it and said—"How beautiful! Strength need not mean ugliness any longer." But one night the wind blew a terrific gale, down came the bridge while a train was crossing it, many lives were lost, and the architect's reputation was ruined. You like a beautiful pen-knife, don't you? But when it suddenly breaks, you say, "Ugh! I'll buy a plain strong one next." And there is nothing more charming than a pleasant boy—a boy with fine manners; but if he is unstable, don't you feel you would very much prefer to have the stability, without the polish?

A distinguished young minister died, and a great friend of his wrote a memoir of him. We hear of him at first as "Peter"—a boy of humble birth, who was full of silent determination, and very clever at his lessons. What was most in Peter's mind, however, was religion. He had a mother who spoke to him a great deal about Jesus Christ, and very early he decided to be His follower.

Now Peter did not think of manners; his goodness was in his heart. But he was a boy to be relied on. Some of the plain country people knew that. His home was about three miles out of the market town to which he went to school, and he used to learn his lessons as he walked back. The women who had been in the town buying things, seeing him coming would sit down at the roadside and say—"We'll wait for Peter; he'll help us up the brae."

Years after this, when he was a student at Aberdeen University, and carrying everything before him in the examinations, he went back to his native parish during his holidays, and found that there had been a revival in the neighbouring town. Many of his old schoolfellows were thinking a great deal about the life of the soul. Peter did all he could to get them to decide to be Christians. Night after night, he argued with one in particular. This lad could not tolerate being spoken to about religion by anyone else. "You are all humbugs," he said; "I don't believe in any of you but Peter." He felt that Peter was a man to be relied on, and that if he said a thing, that thing was true. Some day, I hope, you boys and girls will read the life of Peter Thomson.

Did you ever think how much depends on stability? In building it means the safety of peoples' lives; in men, the prosperity of a country or a nation. In boys and girls—ask yourselves what it means if a boy or girl is not reliable, not constant. Ask yourselves what it means if, in your own family, one is like that. Whisper low to yourself, "Am I that one?"

One of the great themes of the Old Testament is the stability of God. On that we can always depend. Boys and girls do have times when they feel that their fathers and mothers cannot help them. But they have a firm Friend who is ready to listen to their difficulties at any moment. Children, when you are men and women the days will come when you will feel even more that you want support. To whom are you going for that support?

Soldiers who went through the Crimean War, like our soldier boys in the Great War, never spoke to their friends of the hardships they endured; but Hector Macpherson, a soldier of his country and Jesus Christ, writing to a friend, told how, by chance, he one day, met Duncan Matheson, the Scottish evangelist. They had been old friends. The following Sunday, the two retired to a ravine and there, amid the deafening roar of cannon, they prayed and then sang together the old battle-song—

God is our refuge and our strength,
  In straits a present aid;
Therefore, although the earth remove,
  We will not be afraid.

So strengthened did they both feel that they forgot they were in the presence of one of the greatest woes of earth. And the watchword of the two henceforth was "The Lord reigneth." Wouldn't it be a grand thing if you felt that God was your King, your defender, and your support?

A STORY OF GOD'S CARE.

His sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him.—Exod. ii. 4.

ABOUT three thousand years ago there was a kingdom that was very famous. It was one of the most powerful in the world, and its people were the learned of the earth. We are only now finding out how much they knew. Travellers from all over the world go to see the ruined temples, the great statues, and the pyramids which were built by them; and clever men and women are full of eager interest over fragments of their writings which have been discovered. That ancient country of Egypt seems almost to be living again for us; and because of its connexion with the Bible, we want to know more and more about it.

Settled on its eastern frontier was a people of quite a different race from the Egyptians. They were not specially learned, having originally been just flock-owners and shepherds. In temperament they remind us somewhat of our own Highlanders. A family affection had originally drawn them down into Egypt from Palestine. They were the descendants of Joseph and his brethren. You remember how, for Joseph's sake, Pharaoh welcomed Joseph's father and his eleven brothers and their families, and how he gave them a fertile spot on which to settle.

But the years passed; Joseph and his generation died and were forgotten. Another king arose who disliked the shepherd settlers. He, with an eye to the future of his country, became alarmed at the great increase in their numbers. They had multiplied until—says the Bible story—"the land was full of them." From the point of view of the Egyptian king, this was serious; for, thought he, in the event of an invasion, those Hebrews may join the enemy and outnumber the Egyptians. He set himself to crush them, treating them like slaves. Under great oppression they built cities for him, made bricks, and dug canals.

You see, they were no longer merely shepherds; they had learnt a great deal by their sojourn in Egypt. Some amongst them were weavers, others were carpenters or potters; and besides their great stretches of pasture land they had now gardens where they grew cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. That sounds quite homelike, doesn't it? But the Israelites could not feel happy in their little homes; they were not free men and women, but slaves.

All the same, Pharaoh's scheme of oppression was baffled: they continued to grow and multiply. So he made a decree charging all his people to cast every Hebrew male child into the river.

In one Hebrew household, this decree of the king's caused great consternation and perplexity. The family consisted of father, mother, a girl, a boy, and a tiny baby. The mother, with the help of the little girl, had hidden this baby for three months. But you know how difficult it is to hide a baby. Miriam—for that was the girl's name—had, however, a wonderful imagination. She said to her mother—"If the king's daughter only saw our baby she would love him. She is beautiful and kind, mother. I see her every day; she goes to bathe at one particular spot in the river."

So, with Miriam urging her on, the mother constructed a little ark of bulrushes—or rather a basket of the papyrus reeds with which the Egyptians built their light boats. Then she coated this little basket with asphalt and pitch to make it water-tight, and laid the baby into it. She carried the precious burden down to the river, and Miriam ran alongside. She placed it in a creek, where the princess came daily to bathe; and Miriam, her heart panting with excitement, was set to keep watch. While she concealed herself among the water-reeds, she prayed that the great God would take care of her little baby brother.

"They're coming," she whispered loudly to her mother, who stood back a little way. "Mother! they've seen the little ark . . . they've drawn it out of the water. . . . not the princess, mother, but the maids! I'll go. . . . They've opened it and . . . baby's crying!" She darted out of her hiding-place and ran forward. "One of the Hebrew children," she heard the princess say. "How beautiful he is! I'll take this boy for my own. . . . He cries because he is away from his mother."

Miriam ventured near, and curtsied. "The baby would perhaps not be frightened if you got a Hebrew mother to nurse him for you," she said eagerly. "I think I know of one who would do it." "Get that woman for me," the princess said; and Miriam ran back—the little feet could scarcely carry her fast enough—to where the mother stood, and brought her forward. You can imagine how joyful she felt when she heard the princess say, "Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages."

"Clever little Miriam!" you say. We say the same. But it was God who cared all the time for little Moses in his basket cradle. And God was caring for the poor oppressed Hebrews too. His time for delivering them was at hand, and this baby was to be the man to lead them out of the land of slavery. God had a great piece of work in store for that tiny Hebrew child.

And God still cares for His children, and He still has some special bit of work in store for each. That bit of work is waiting for you, children, and it is you, and you only, who can do it. What is it to be? I wonder. It may be something very great in the world's eyes. It may be something which to other people seems quite ordinary. But in God's sight it is great whatever it may be. And He expects you to do it with all your might.

Boys and girls, never in all its history has the world needed men and women, great in God's sense of the word, more than it needs them to-day. The world is longing for them, crying for them, praying for them. Are you going to be, like Moses and Miriam, of the number of God's great men and women?

A KNIGHT OF OLD.

And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.—Exod. ii. 17.

I WONDER how many of you like to hear stories about the brave knights of old. I think most of us do. When we visit old castles we picture some brave warrior setting forth on his war-steed to fight for the right or defend the honour of a fair lady. We can see his armour glistening and hear his sword clanking by his side as he rides under the portcullis, and over the drawbridge, and away into the great world. And we know he will not return until he can bring back the record of some glorious deed to lay at the feet of the lady who waves a last farewell from the turret window.

Do you know that in the Bible there is the story of a brave knight? Certainly he wore no shining armour, but nevertheless he was a very true and perfect knight. It is such a little story, and it comes in between such important big ones, that perhaps you never noticed it.

The knight had been brought up in a king's palace. The king's daughter had found him—a tiny baby who seemed to belong to nobody—and as she had a kind and loving heart, she had taken him home and brought him up as her son. Now although the king was a very wicked man, his daughter was a good woman; and when the baby grew into a boy one of the first lessons she taught him was to be courteous, to be considerate of others.

Years passed, and the boy became a man—brave, warm-hearted, and chivalrous. One day he did something which made the king very angry. He was so angry that he sought to kill the young knight, and our hero was obliged to leave the palace and go far away into a strange land.

For long he travelled until, one day towards evening, he came to a place where there was a well. There he sat down to rest. The day had been very hot, and he was glad of the cooling draught and the kindly shade of the trees which surrounded the spring.

Soon he heard in the distance voices and the bleating of sheep. Seven young maidens carrying buckets approached the spring. They filled their buckets from the well and emptied them into some stone troughs which stood near.

They were busily engaged when, from the opposite direction, appeared some rough-looking shepherds also leading a large flock of sheep. "Ah, Zipporah," sighed one of the girls, "our enemies once more! Alas, all our toil is for naught!" Even as she spoke, the shepherds with loud cries and rough blows drove off the sheep belonging to the maidens and led their own flock to the troughs.

But they had reckoned without the silent figure at the well-side. Awakened from a day-dream of a far land and a loving woman who had been more than a mother to him, the young knight stood before them with blazing eyes. How dare they treat a few helpless women in such a way? They were three to one! What did it matter?

The cowardly shepherds, confronted by a brave young knight who was not afraid to fight against great odds, soon fled. Then the knight, not content with having driven off their enemies, courteously helped the maidens to water their flocks.

When the shepherdesses reached home they told their father the story, and he was so pleased that he invited the young man to stay with him. Later he betrothed him to his daughter Zipporah.

I wonder if you have guessed the name of the knight? I am sure some of you have. Yes, his name was Moses. And the reason why I have told you the story is because I want you to notice how courteous a brave man can be. Moses' courtesy was one of the finest traits in his character, and it is a trait that you find in every truly great man.

Some people seem to have the idea that you can't be gentle and manly at the same time. That is an entirely mistaken idea. Lord Roberts was one of the most gentle of men and he was one of the bravest. The young knight in our story was very brave and he was very gentle too.

There is a beautiful legend about Moses which tells how God chose him to lead the Israelites because he was so gentle. Would you like to hear it?

After the adventure at the well, Moses became a shepherd and kept his father-in-law's sheep. He used to take them out to the hills to graze, and one day he missed a little lamb from the flock. He had been so busy with the rest of the sheep that the lamb had wandered some distance before he noticed its absence, so it was a good while before he overtook it.

When the lamb saw him coming it just took one look over its shoulder and away it went, leaping and gambolling, on and on over the fields, always keeping just a little bit in front of the shepherd. At length it stopped where a cool spring gushed out of the mountain-side. It buried its head in the water, and drank and drank as if it never could have enough. At last its thirst was quenched, and very gently Moses said: "Poor little thing, was it because you were so very thirsty that you ran so fast and so far? You must be very tired." Then tenderly he lifted the tiny creature and, laying it on his shoulder, carried it all the way back to the fold.

And when God saw how gentle Moses was with the little lamb He said: "This shall be the shepherd to lead My people Israel."

Don't be ashamed to be gentle, boys and girls, don't be too proud to be courteous. Do you know who is the greatest Hero the world has ever seen? The gentle Jesus.

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A FAMOUS TRAINING GROUND.

Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness.—Exod. iii. 1.

Not very long ago a wonderful religious poem appeared. When people read it, they all wanted to know who the writer was, and where he had got such a deep knowledge of the heart of man. After his death, the story of his life was told. It had been a very, very sad life. He had been for a long time "at the back of the wilderness." But God had spoken to him there, and he could not keep silence: he wrote poems that made the world wonder. You try to think where the poet's wilderness could be, I daresay. It was the streets of a great city and that poet's name was Francis Thompson. And the poem that he wrote is called "The Hound of Heaven." You will read it some day when you are a little older, and then you will marvel too.

The wilderness that Moses knew was the side of a rugged mountain. You remember how he came there. One day he was so angry at an Egyptian for ill-treating one of the Hebrew slaves that he forgot everything except that he also was a Hebrew, and slew the man. After that the palace where he had been brought up by Pharaoh's daughter was unsafe for him, and he had to flee from the wrath of Pharaoh.

He travelled and travelled until he came to a weird mountain region. The loneliness and desolation of it seemed in keeping with his state of mind, so he settled there and became a shepherd. It was a place with no outlet for his learning or his ambitions. Moses had had the best education that Egypt could give. He had had opportunities of studying science, art, and philosophy—everything in fact that would fit him for the position of an Egyptian noble and statesman. And now he, who from childhood had known what it was to wear only the finest linen, was clothed in the coarse hair-cloth of the mountain shepherd!

We cannot tell what his thoughts were, or what struggles he went through in his mind. But we know this. He went into the desert a young man apparently born to command, ready to smite down if he were not obeyed; and after a long time he came out of it one of the meekest men that ever lived. The wilderness, where day after day he led his flocks to the little fertile places near the streams on the mountain-side, was his training ground. It was Moses the meek man that God needed. When Moses had learnt his lesson God called him, and called him in this very wilderness

Men in the loneliness of the prairies of America have felt conscious of what they called an "Awful Presence," and have come out of the great solitude different beings. We can imagine that for Moses every bush blazed with glory, and that the voice of God calling him to go forth to help his brothers brought him no surprise. Moses' wilderness was a great wilderness, and his call a great call.

But even boys and girls may have their time of being in the wilderness. One of my earliest recollections is of peeping in at the door of a homely parlour and seeing a boy of seven or eight years old—he seemed big to me then—leaning with his elbows on a table, his hands covering his face. He had met with an accident at school; he knew that his eye was badly hurt, and he was thinking, "Perhaps I shall be blind all my life." To one who was the very spirit of fun in the playground, that seemed a hard lot indeed. He was in the wilderness. Many years afterwards I came to know that God had spoken to him there.

Your wilderness may be quite near home—in a plain little parlour, at a kitchen fireside. A girl may feel a call to remain by her father and mother, when she would fain be out in the world working. A boy's wilderness! What could it be? He has so much to make life happy. "I would like to be a minister like father," said a boy to his grandmother the other day; "but—but Granny—and his voice broke—why is it that I can't speak properly like Jim?" His heart was sore because of a stammer with which he had been born. You understand how he felt, don't you, boys? He was at "the back of the wilderness."

Why has the wilderness become such a famous training ground for men and women and boys and girls? It is because the wilderness is a place where God often meets with people. Then it becomes holy —so holy that we feel we must "take off our shoes from off our feet" when we hear Him saying, "Take courage, I will be with you and help you." Boys and girls, we need not fear the wilderness. God is our Friend there and everywhere.

A MAN WHO WAS AFRAID.

Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?—Exod. iii. 11.

Boys and girls, I want to speak to you this morning about fear. Perhaps some of your grown-up friends think that is a mistake. They may be saying to themselves—"If he wants to cure a habit of fear, let him preach about courage." A very wise remark indeed. All the same, I feel sure that there are among you boys and girls so possessed by some nameless fear that at times they cannot allow themselves to think of courage at all. It is to these especially that I wish to speak.

Very few boys will acknowledge, even to a companion, that they are afraid of anything. Girls, on the other hand, cannot help showing that they shrink from certain things; you know how you boys laugh and make fun of your sisters over this. It is unkind. Laugh as you may, their shrinking very often is something they cannot help.

I knew a girl who, when as a child she went on her first railway journey, every now and then hid her head in her mother's arms and cried—"Oh, mother! I'm frightened, it's so ugly under the arches." She is a middle-aged woman now, yet when she travels into the city of London from the suburbs, at one part she carefully avoids turning her head either to the right or to the left, that she may not see those same ugly places under the arches. She was born with a horror of ugliness.

Again, among boys who will eagerly and enthusiastically join the Scouts or Territorials, knowing that it may some day mean the giving of their lives for their country, there are to be met those who would renounce anything rather than face a roomful of people. Then some men have an indescribable fear of the battlefield, but in an illness they will face up to death almost as to a friend.

Carlyle had a great friend called John Sterling. He loved him very much, and when he died he wrote his biography. This John Sterling was one of the gentlest, most timid souls one could meet; yet when he was very ill and going to die, he wrote to Carlyle, "I tread the common road into the great darkness without any thought of fear, and with very much of hope."

And girls—once a wonderful family grew up in a Yorkshire parsonage. They were all girls but one—shy girls too. She who was best known to the world was a frail delicate little thing. Her life, from its very beginning, was full of experiences far too sad for a child to have to suffer. When, as a young girl, she went to school at Brussels she felt she could scarcely pray because of a terrible fear that came upon her. "When I tried to pray," she wrote, "I could only utter these words: 'From my youth up Thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind.'" Back at home, in the parsonage, one family sorrow followed on the back of another. She was nearly heart-broken, but her courage was marvellous. Persevering all by herself, she became one of the greatest novelists of last century. Famous men in London wanted to meet Charlotte Brontë, the wonderful little woman who could write such bold things, but her shyness had never disappeared—she shrank from the ordeal, and just wanted to be back among the lonely Yorkshire moors.

I don't expect this church to be the nursery of geniuses, but I believe there is scarcely a boy or girl in it who is not conscious of some fear that keeps him from doing the right thing at the right moment. It is a fear that grips very hard. God knows all about it.

There is put very near the beginning of the greatest book in the world the story of a great and strong man who was afraid. I do not think, however, that he was afraid as a boy. I rather believe he would be proud of himself, living as he did in the royal palace in Egypt. There was only the greatness of man to make him afraid there; and he had at his command everything that his heart could desire. But in Midian Moses found himself face to face with God. After thirty or forty years of the solitude he said, "Who am I?" Fear had been born within him.

I believe that most of you boys and girls who fear have got your shyness, your diffidence, from God. You were born with it. It is what is called constitutional. If that is so, your Heavenly Father understands it. He is just—He is more—He is kind as a mother.

When your mother sends you away to school, or to your first situation, she puts certain things into your trunk. Perhaps you have only a very little box; she may not have much money. But she remembers what you need. If you are liable to take cold, she puts in warm things to protect you; if you wear out your socks quickly, she remembers you are no hand at darning—there seem to be pairs of socks rolled round everything.

Your Heavenly Father remembers what you need for going out into the world. He knows you through and through. The "Who am I?" of Moses was met with God's word—"I will be with thee." He is constantly speaking to this fear in men and women, boys and girls—"Fear not . . . Fear not."

Once there was a minister who was always very nervous and timid when he stood up to preach. A good old elder noticed it, and sympathized with him. "Don't be troubled in the pulpit," the old man said to him one day. "Don't think about anything but the word of the Lord and the souls of your people. We will pray for you; and maybe you will be able to say to yourself next Sabbath as you look down on us—'They all love me.'"

Boys and girls, if sometimes you fear even to face your day's work, remember there is Someone who loves you very much, Someone who knows all about you. Then courage will come.

LOCUSTS.

To-morrow will I bring locusts into thy border.—Exod. x. 4.

LOCUSTS are insects which are found in large numbers in Eastern countries. We have no proper locusts in this country, but our crickets and grasshoppers belong to the same family. In itself a locust is a small thing. So is a snowflake. But if there are snowflakes enough they can stop a train, or bury a town. So if you have thousands upon thousands of locusts, each hungrily eating every green leaf it can find, a field will soon be stripped bare.

When the locusts came to Egypt they came with an "east wind." That is how they always come to Egypt, because the locusts are hatched in the desert places to the east, and when the wind blows strongly from that direction, it blows them in front of it. They cannot fly against the wind. It catches them and whirls them round and round. That is why the Psalmist says, "I am tossed up and down as the locust."

The locust lays its eggs in the ground. The eggs are contained in egg-cases, and each case holds about one hundred eggs. From these eggs the young locusts are hatched. They are then in what is called the *larva* stage. They have legs but no wings, and they move by hopping about. They immediately join together in large numbers and spread themselves over every growing thing. They change their skins six times before they are full-grown. When they have moulted four times they have reached what is called the *pupa* stage, and you can see their small wings growing, but they cannot use them yet because they are enclosed in cases. They now stop jumping and begin to walk. Twice again they change their skins, and after the last change they appear as full-grown locusts. They have two pairs of wings. The front wings are straight, and the back wings are very large and wide and are folded like a fan under the front wings. They have six legs, the hind pair very long and strong so that they can leap with them. When they have moulted for the last time they spread out their wings in the sun till they are dry; then they mount up into the air and fly away in clouds.

They fly long distances, and in such multitudes that they darken the sky like a cloud, and the noise of their wings is like pattering rain. At night they settle on the trees in such numbers that they break down the branches. As soon as the sun rises they fly on again.

While they are flying they eat very little; but at the places where they rest they lay their eggs. So when people see them about to alight on their fields or gardens, they beat iron pans and fire guns and shout in order to frighten them off. Where the locusts do alight, men and women, and children too, catch as many as they can, put them into sacks, and destroy them. Then they hunt for the eggs and destroy as many as they can find. But alas! the seekers cannot find all the eggs, and in about three weeks those left hatch out into *larvæ* and begin their terrible march.

By some instinct they keep together. As it says in the Book of Proverbs, "The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands." They march straight forward in regular lines like armies of soldiers, their leaders in front. They cover the ground for miles sometimes to the depth of several inches. Nothing can stop them. They climb trees and walls, and get into houses. They even walk straight into water. They have been seen to drop in swarms into the river Jordan where the fish were eagerly awaiting them with open mouths.

And where they have passed there is utter desolation. Not a leaf is to be seen, not a blade of grass. The trees are stripped of their very bark. No wonder the Egyptians were terrified when Moses threatened them with a plague of locusts!

By the law of Moses, locusts were allowed as food, and they are still eaten in Palestine. They are dried and ground into meal, or toasted and eaten. Sometimes they are stewed with butter. Cooked thus they taste rather like shrimps. John the Baptist lived on "locusts and wild honey." It was strange fare, but just what could be got by a hermit in the wilderness of Judæa, where locusts are plentiful, and the clefts of the rocks are full of wild bees and their stores.

Now, as I said before, fortunately we have no real locusts in this land, but I think we all have our plague of locusts nevertheless.

What is your plague of locusts? I'll tell you mine. My plague of locusts is the little faults that will keep hopping up where they are not wanted. These are a real plague to myself and a worse plague to those around me. I should not be at all surprised to hear that your plague of locusts bore a family resemblance to mine.

What shall we do then with our locusts—you and I? What shall we do with the little hot tempers, and the jealous feelings, and the sulky looks, and the selfish natures, and the greedy longings that threaten to eat our hearts bare of all that is good and wholesome and lovely?

There is only one cure for the real locust. There is only one cure for our special locusts. Kill them in the egg stage. Don't let them ever grow up.

CHILDREN OF THE WEST WIND.

An exceeding strong west wind.—Exod. x. 19.

We have left the West wind to the last,[1] but although it is last, please don't run away with the idea that it is in any sense least. The West wind has a very important part to play in these islands. Those who watch the winds tell us that there are almost two days in which West or South-West winds blow over them to one day that easterly winds blow. I don't know whether the proportion of West-wind people to East-wind people is the same, but I think you will find that the number of West-wind people is not at all small.

1. Now, let us see what are the characteristics of the West wind. Well, first of all, it is a warm wind. It blows off the great Atlantic Ocean, and it carries with it some of the warmth of the Gulf Stream, which does so much to keep our Islands mild.

West-wind people are very warm-hearted. They give you a welcome when you go among them, and they are ready to share what they have with you. They are kindly and sympathetic and affectionate. Perhaps their affections are not very deep. They are apt to forget you when you are out of sight; but then you must remember what a lot of people find accommodation in their hearts.

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[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are Exod. xiv. 21, Ezek. i. 4, Acts xxvii. 13.

2. Then the West wind is rather a wet wind. It blows off a great expanse of ocean and brings much moisture with it. When this warm, moist air touches the cold tops of our Western mountains, the moisture comes down as rain.

We are not going to accuse the West-wind people of being mournful, but I think you will find they are more easily moved to laughter and to tears than the children of any other wind.

3. But the thing that has struck me most about the West wind is its fitfulness. Sometimes it blows quite softly. Then in a few minutes a stiff breeze has risen, and before long you have a hurricane—tearing the leaves off the trees, driving the dust in wild clouds, lashing the waves into angry foam.

This is the chief characteristic of the West-wind people. They are excitable, quick, not very dependable. They act on the impulse of the moment without stopping to think, and often they have much cause to regret their hasty actions. Their temper is somewhat gusty, rising in a moment without the least warning and often with very little cause. One moment they are all gentleness and laughter, the next a regular tempest is raging so that every one is glad to get out of their way.

Now, West-wind people, will you look at your text?—"An exceeding strong west wind." And what did the "exceeding strong west wind" do? It took up the locusts—that terrible plague which had been devouring every green thing in Egypt—"it took up the locusts, and drove them into the Red Sea."

Do you know that you are really wasting a great deal of energy? It is your nature to be gusty. Well, there are in the world plenty of great wrongs waiting to be blown away by big gales. What a lot of good you could do if you would only store up your energy to blow away these wrongs instead of squandering it in fitful gusts and storms in tea-pots! That energy of yours is a great power, but first you must learn to control it. You must learn to put the brake on your temper and your impulses, else you will be like a powerful engine rushing uncontrolled down a steep incline to meet almost certain destruction at the bottom.

Once a great general was talking about the battles he had fought and the victories he had won, and someone asked him which had been the proudest moment of his life. What do you think he answered? "The grandest moment of my life," he said, "was when I got control of myself."

I want to tell you about a boy who "got control of" himself. His name was Louis, Duke of Burgundy, and he was the grandson of Louis XIV. of France. When he was quite small he was wilful, greedy, and cruel. His temper was so violent that his friends were afraid to play with him. If he lost a game he flew into a terrible passion.

When Louis was seven years of age he came under the charge of the wise and faithful Abbé de Fénelon. A year later he wrote the following promise on a piece of paper: "I promise, on the faith of a prince, to M. l'Abbé de Fénelon, that I will do at once whatever he bids me, and will obey him instantly in whatever he forbids; and if I break my word, I will submit to every possible punishment and dishonour. Given at Versailles, November 29, 1689. Signed, LOUIS."

The boy evidently found it was easier to make a promise than to keep it, for a few lines are added later: "Louis, who promises anew to keep his promise better, September 20. . . . I beg M. de Fénelon to let me try again."

Louis did try again, and by the time his boyhood was over he had his temper well under control. He grew up strong and wise, with a fine sense of duty; and some people think that, had he lived, the French Revolution would never have taken place.

You are filled with energy and impulse, West-wind people, and you need a strong hand to help you to control yourselves. If you trust to your own power you can never be sure that you will get the mastery, but there is One who can help you, and if you take Him as your Master your energies will be turned to true and noble use.

The world has need of you all—children of the

North, the South, the East, the West. So blow away fresh winds! Blow all the cobwebs off this dusty old world! We could not spare any one of you.

> Whichever way the wind doth blow,
> Some heart is glad to have it so;
> Then blow it east, or blow it west,
> The wind that blows, that wind is best.

THE BEGINNING OF MONTHS.

This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.—Exod. xii. 2.

SOME of you may have visited an old farm; possibly you have lived at one. Among the things you saw there, you will remember a strange looking machine in the corn yard. It was like a merry-go-round in a fair. If you were lucky enough to be at the farm in late autumn you saw a horse tied to this machine and being driven round and round in a circle, making the great thing move while it went. Now, it is not the machine I want you to think of, but the horse. It had to plod on patiently over the same round for hours, kept going all the time by the whip of the man beside it.

You boys and girls are inclined to think of school life as being something like this—a dull dreary affair, one continual round of work that never seems to stop. You forget that although your work in a sense goes round in a circle, it is a circle not in the least like that of the farm-yard wheel. The whip need not be there at all, and there's a break after every round. After each break you start afresh, and if you have been working you find yourselves on a slightly higher level.

You have just had your break. It may have meant a holiday at the seaside or in the country. I know of some brave and patient little people who were at home all the time, waiting, sometimes even longing, for the wheel to start again.

Is there not something about October that makes us feel we are off on the new round—the sharp air, the frost on the grass, the grey mornings? It is the beginning of our year. For the big boys and girls that may mean a great deal; perhaps an entrance to the University or a chance to do better there. One October many years ago, a very clever lad tried a University bursary competition. He did not take a high place, but it entitled him to a small bursary. "I felt I did not deserve one at all," he wrote to his sister, "but now I am working like a Dutchman."

The new start may mean going into business. The other day I met a boy who had just left the Sunday School. "I'm a chemist now," he said, "I'll be an apprentice till I'm nearly eighteen; that's *old.*" He had an idea of rising in the world, for he went on to say, "After that, I'll try to make money enough to build a house for my mother."

Some of you will have joined the Latin class for the first time. A knowledge of Latin opens a door to wonderful secrets. And the Greek class—there are great books written in Greek; the very greatest of these is our New Testament. The younger boys and girls have nearly all got new books: even the very wee ones can show their new primers. Ever upwards you boys and girls go, as October comes round—October, the dawn of the year.

"This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you." These were the words of the Lord that came to the Israelites through Moses. It meant the beginning of their freedom from bondage. They would be feeling very solemn; their boys and girls would be almost afraid to ask questions, but you may feel sure they were eager to know what the new life was to be like.

The setting out is always hopeful. The most wearisome part of a journey is not the end but the middle—January, February, March—tramp, tramp, tramp; the brave boys and girls will keep up their courage then; they will set a stout heart to the long level road.

October will come again. Ever ascending, you will one day come to a place from which you can look down and say, "I remember the reading book that really set me to work; I got it one October morning." Better still, from the heights you may one day see something of the glory that is in store for those who have hungered for the hill-top of goodness. Jesus Himself said that those are blessed who hunger and thirst after righteousness. If you begin to do that to-day, "this month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you."

PLAYING THE GAME.

Stand still. . . . Go forward.—Exod. xiv. 13, 15.

THE other Sunday I asked a class of Industrial School boys what sort of boy they admired most. Immediately came the answer—"A fellow who plays the game." I asked what they meant, and one replied, "Please, it means being straight."

"Being straight" takes in a great deal, but not all that "playing the game" implies. A boy who was a great favourite at school failed in an examination. He was very down-hearted, for he had hoped to come out well. His master felt sorry for him. He did not say, "Cheer up: you'll do better next time," however; he just looked and said, "Play the game, old chap." You have an idea what he meant, haven't you?

In to-day's text Moses is telling the children of Israel to "play the game." The Israelites had set out from Egypt believing that God would help them when they met with difficulties. But when they actually did come across the difficulties, they immediately forgot their faith. They lost heart and upbraided Moses, crying, "It would have been better for us to have gone on serving the Egyptians than to die in this wilderness. Why did you not leave us alone?"

You think the children of Israel were stupid and cowardly, don't you? You must remember that for many generations they had been just poor downtrodden slaves in Egypt. And slaves have no spirit. It takes a free man to have true courage. Moses knew all this; he was sorry for the frightened and perplexed men and women.

In a very gentle way the great leader said, "Play the game." "Fear ye not, stand still. . . . The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." He knew how much God had already been to the children of Israel: and he knew what it was to play the game by standing still. He had learned to do that at the back of the wilderness, when he had fled from the king of Egypt.

But God let Moses know that in this case he must be something else than gentle. "Why do you keep praying?" "Wherefore criest thou unto me?" were God's words. "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they *go forward.*"

Do you think it is possible to "play the game" by standing still? Do you think a soldier in war time could do it? He could. During the Great War when rations had to be conveyed to the men at the front, no light had to be shown: to strike even a match might have meant death. A non-commissioned officer said to his men engaged in this hazardous task: "Whenever a searchlight is turned on you, or the country is lit up by a flare or a star shell, stand perfectly still. It's movement that gives the show away. Keep still, and they'll think you're a bush, or a tree. But as sure as you move, you're a deader."

But it is by going forward that a real soldier generally has to play the game. "What does it feel like to be in a charge?" someone asked a Gordon Highlander. "I just put my hand over my eyes," he answered, "and asked God to help me to do my duty like a man. We rose up and ran forward a little way, and then fell flat while the bullets and shrapnel flew over us like hail: then on again."

This is what someone has written about "playing the game" on the cricket field, on the battlefield, and on the greater field of life.

There's a breathless hush in the Close to-night—
    Ten to make and the match to win—
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
    An hour to play and the last man in.
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
    Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote—
    "Play up! play up! and play the game!"

The sand of the desert is sodden red,—
    Red with the wreck of a square that broke;—
The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead,
    And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.
The river of death has brimmed his banks,
    And England's far, and Honour a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks:
    "Play up! play up! and play the game!"

This is the word that year by year,
  While in her place the School is set,
Every one of her sons must hear,
  And none that hears it dare forget.
This they all with a joyful mind
  Bear through life like a torch in flame,
And falling fling to the host behind—
  "Play up! play up! and play the game!"[1]

That is like the game of life. You have just started on it, boys and girls, and you were not made for failure. Someone wants to be your Captain. He is the greatest leader that ever was in the world. With His hand on the shoulder of each one of you He is saying, "Play the game." If you yield yourselves to His leadership, you are sure of "getting there" in the end.

He may tell you to "stand still." If so, ask Him to help you to do that bravely. To most of you He will say, "Go forward." I like best to think of you doing that, and, at the last, calling to those coming up behind—"Play up! play up! and play the game!"

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[1] Henry Newbolt, *Poems New and Old*, p. 78.

CHILDREN OF THE EAST WIND.

A strong east wind.—Exod. xiv. 21.

TO-DAY it is the turn of the children of the East wind.

Now, I wonder if you have noticed that when you mention the East wind people have very little good to say about it? "That nasty, biting wind!" they exclaim. "It chills you through and through; it makes all your bones ache; it brings colds and all sorts of horrid troubles with it!"

Well, there are two sides to every question—a good side, and a bad side; and we are going to look at both sides of the East wind. It has its faults, and we are ready to admit them, but we are going to try and find out its good points also.

1. The thing that strikes one first about this wind is its blighting power. In Palestine the East wind is dry and scorching. It blows from the desert and it withers the corn; and destroys the fruit. The Bible often speaks of this blighting power of the East wind. You remember, for instance, how Pharaoh in his dream saw seven thin ears of corn "blasted by the east wind."

It seems rather queer to think of an East wind being hot, does it not? We are accustomed to regard it as a bitterly cold wind. But the reason why it is cold here is that it comes to us chiefly in Spring, and it comes across the frozen plains of Russia.

But here is a strange thing. Although the East wind in Palestine is burning hot, and the East wind in Britain is bitterly cold, in both places it has very much the same effect—it blights and destroys young plants. Last Spring I planted out some sweet-peas. For a week or two they looked strong and sturdy. Then came a few days of wind blowing from the East, and when I went to look at the sweet-peas their poor leaves were all yellow and shrivelled by the cruel blast. You would have thought some creature had got at their roots and had been gnawing their life away.

Some people are very like the East wind. They blight and destroy a great deal of happiness in the world by their tempers and their tongues. There are those who say cutting things with intent to wound; there are those who say biting things in an attempt to be clever; and there are those who insist upon telling unpleasant truths in the most unpleasant way.

Now I want to say this to the East-wind people. I don't think you mean half you say. I think very often you speak in the heat of the moment, and you don't realize the harm you are doing. But remember your unkind words may rankle and wound long after you have forgotten them. The tongue is a terrible weapon. It can inflict mortal injuries. It can separate lifelong friends, and cause great dispeace in a family circle. Some day you may wake to find that by your bitter words you have blighted the happiness of someone you love very dearly.

Now St. James tells us that "the tongue can no man tame." He says that "every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed by mankind: but the tongue can no man tame." Well, it is true that no *other* man can tame your tongue for you, but you can tame it for yourself. You will have a hard fight, and sometimes it will seem as if this wild beast were conquering you instead of your conquering it, but if Jesus is on your side you are sure to win in the end, for He has won the victory over all our enemies.

2. Perhaps you think I have been rather hard on the East wind, so now I am going to say something nice about it. Have you noticed that the East wind often brings us bright sunshine? We have got so used to discussing its faults that we sometimes forget the good things it does. It comes to us when the ground is sodden with the winter snow and rain, and it dries the soil so that the farmer can get his seed sown. It helps us to forget its own bitterness by the bright sunshine it brings.

Do you know, East-wind people, you have a great power in you to bring sunshine into the world? Your tongues have been employed in saying cutting, cruel things. Why not use them in being witty in a kind way? Why not employ them to defend the right in the face of evil? Why not train them to say kind things that will warm people's hearts?

Once a famous clergyman—the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher—came across a little ragged newsboy standing shivering at the edge of the pavement. He went up to him and said, "Poor little fellow! Aren't you very cold?" And the boy replied, "I was, sir, before you spoke to me." The kind words had made him feel almost warm again.

Try to put the sunshine of a smile into all you say and do. It will make things easier, and it will make the world brighter.

Sometimes along our East coasts the East wind brings a thick mist. If you go inland a few miles you will find the sun shining brightly, but the people along the coast cannot see the sunshine for the mist. East-wind people often hide their own good qualities behind a cold mist. Get rid of the mist, dear East-wind people! Let us see the glorious Spring sunshine which you bring! For the world has need of all its sunshine.[1]

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[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are Exod. x. 19 Ezek. i. 4, Acts xxvii. 13.

A WONDERFUL TREE.

They could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: . . . and the Lord shewed him [Moses] a tree, and he cast it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet.—Exod. xv. 23, 25.

Did you ever think how much happier this world is because there are trees in it? If you shut your eyes and picture one of the greatest days of your summer holidays, you will certainly see a tree or trees among the many things that made you happy. Perhaps you see yourself lying underneath one, or performing wonderful feats of climbing. Trees are among the good gifts of God to boys and girls. It may dawn upon you for the first time in your life that the world is beautiful, when you look upon the trees in spring. "The green is lovely, mother," I heard a little girl say, and then she added, "Why don't people dress themselves oftener in that colour?"

And trees, as you know, have a big place in the Bible. One of the first trees mentioned in it gives us a troubled feeling. I remember being made very unhappy long ago by trying to understand about that tree in the Garden of Eden. But this one of which we read in Exodus brings us a pleasant surprise. The story of it reads like a fairy tale. Things that happened long ago do have a way of seeming like fairy tales.

Listen to this Bible "tree" story. The Israelites had been wandering for three days in a very dry country; they could get no water to drink. At last they reached a place called Marah. There was plenty of water there, but it was so bitter that no one could drink it. They complained, and they murmured against Moses; that was just their way. Moses prayed to the Lord; that was his way. The Lord's way was to show Moses a tree, which, when he cast it into the waters, made them sweet.

If we had had the management of things, we should have said, "The waters are not fit to drink, let the children of Israel go on." Then the people, many of them at least, would have died of thirst. I read the other day of a little girl who kept stirring her tea so vigorously that there seemed danger of a hole being made in her cup. She sipped and stirred, and sipped and stirred; at last, holding the spoon in her hand, she said, "Oh, mother, it won't come sweet, pour it out." But the mother was wise. She did not pour it out, but said, "Oh dear! I forgot to put in any sugar."

Some people can hear sermons from old stories, and from fairy tales. What sort of sermon does this story of the tree at Marah preach? One that should be quite useful for boys and girls. Did you ever see a little fellow being dragged to school against his will? He cried as if his heart would break. To him going to school was like having the waters of Marah to drink.

A good mother would never yield to his tears by letting him stay at home. She would try to sweeten the waters by showing him how good it was to get to know things.

Hans Andersen, the great fairy tale writer, tells of a boy who had learnt to sweeten the waters for himself. "There once lived in an old cellar, down in a little narrow street, a poor, sick boy. He had been confined to his bed from his earliest years; perhaps now and then he was able to take a few turns up and down his little room on his crutches, but that was all he could do. Sometimes during the summer the sunbeams would stream through his little cellar-window, and then, if the child sat up and felt the warm sun shining upon him, and could see the crimson blood in his slight, wasted, transparent fingers, as he held them up to the light, he would say, 'To-day, I have been out!' He knew the pleasant woods and their bright vernal green only by the neighbour's son bringing him the first fresh boughs of the beech-tree, which he would hold over his head, and then fancy he was under the shade of the beech trees, with the birds warbling and the sun shining around him.

"One day in spring the neighbour's son brought him some field-flowers, and among them was one with a root; so it was put into a flower-pot and placed at the window, close by the bed, and, being carefully planted, it flourished and put forth shoots and bore flowers every year. It was like a beautiful garden to the poor boy, his little treasure upon earth; he watered it, and tended it, taking care that every sunbeam, from the first to the last which penetrated his little low window, should fall upon the plant. And its flowers, with their soft colours and fragrance, mingled with his dreams."[1]

It is good to think of sick children having the water of Marah sweetened for them, is it not?

During the Great War, many of your fathers and mothers had to drink the waters of Marah. They felt them to be very bitter. You children also had to taste them. You had your own little bit of sorrow. But the waters were sweetened. You came to know, as you never knew before, the beauty of sacrifice. Many of your big brothers gave up their lives for the sake of what they knew to be right, and they were not afraid. They gloried in the doing of it.

Now, I want to tell you about another tree. The cross on which Christ died is sometimes spoken of as the "Tree." It is by that Tree that we are saved from what makes both life and death very bitter—that is, sin. I do not need to speak to you of the unhappiness that comes from doing wrong. You have tasted that Marah many a time ere now. But Jesus Christ died upon the "Tree" that you might have the sweet happiness of forgiveness.

He died that we might be forgiven,
  He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to Heaven,
  Saved by His precious blood.

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[1] *Andersen's Fairy Tales*, 196.

A ROYAL BANNER.

Jehovah-nissi—The Lord is my banner.—Exod. xvii. 15 (RVm).

HAVE you ever seen an old regimental flag? I remember seeing some once in a cathedral. There they hung—faded and tattered and smoke-begrimed—yet the sight of them thrilled me through and through. What scenes they had witnessed!—these shabby old bits of silk—what adventures they had been through! How many lives had been laid down to keep them flying! How many a dying hope they had kept alive! On each were embroidered names—Inkerman, Lucknow, Tel-el Kebir. They were the names of the battles where they had won fame. There they hung in the peace of their last resting-place, far removed from the din of battle; yet each seemed to preach a silent lesson of duty bravely done.

A flag in itself is just a bit of coloured silk with a device on it. What makes it so precious? It is the cause for which it stands. Have you ever been on a battleship at sunset? As the sun dips below the horizon a bugle sounds and the flag is hauled down; and every sailor, no matter what he is doing, stands in silence to salute it. But it is not really the flag he is saluting: it is the king whom the flag represents.

When Moses took as the motto of the children of Israel the words "Jehovah-nissi"—"The Lord is my banner," he meant that the Israelites were to take God as their King and Leader. On that day Moses' rod—the symbol of God's power—had been as a banner rallying the people. When he held it up Israel prevailed, and when, in sheer exhaustion, his hand fell down, Amalek prevailed. You remember how Aaron and Hur supported him—one on either side—that he might be able to hold up his hands till sunset; and so Israel won the victory.

It was to celebrate this victory, and to keep it in the remembrance of the Israelites, that Moses built the altar. The name by which he called it—"Jehovah-nissi"—was at once a thanksgiving to the Leader who had made them conquerors and a promise to be faithful and obedient to Him in the future.

Like the Israelites of old we can all enlist under this wonderful banner.

When our British soldiers wish to enlist they have to be examined by a doctor; not all who present themselves are accepted. They must not be too old or too young, they must be a certain height, measure so much round the chest, have good eyesight, sound teeth, and be otherwise healthy. But the Heavenly King accepts everybody. There is no age limit. Old and young alike may enlist. He accepts girls as well as boys, and He is able to make splendid soldiers even of the weakest.

What are some of the duties of a soldier towards his banner? First, *he must be loyal to it.*—Some of the most glorious deeds of history are recorded of men who fought for their banner with their last breath.

There is a story told of a brave young soldier who was found lying in a trench severely wounded and in great pain. The enemy found him and wished to take him away to hospital to have his wounds dressed, but the man would not allow them to lift him. Next day he was discovered dead in the trench, and when they lifted him up what do you think was underneath?—the flag of his regiment! He had died rather than surrender it.

That is the kind of loyalty which Jesus wants from His soldiers.

Secondly, *a soldier must never be ashamed of the flag.*—Do you think a British soldier is ever ashamed of his flag? What a ridiculous question to ask! On the contrary it thrills him with pride, and spurs him on to noble deeds. I can imagine only one case in which he would feel ashamed of it—if he saw it in the hands of the enemy.

Yet Christ's soldiers are sometimes ashamed of their colours. The Apostle Peter was once ashamed of his, but one look from his Master cured him for life. He went out and wept bitterly, and we know that afterwards he braved many dangers for Christ's sake and at the last died a martyr's death. Nowadays we are not likely to be asked to be martyrs, but we are still asked to defend all that is noble and right, and to stand up for the weak and defenceless.

In the last place, *the soldier must follow wherever the banner leads.*—Unquestioning obedience is the first duty of a soldier. If that goes, everything goes. What would you think of a soldier who said "I won't" when he received an order? If that sort of thing were allowed there would soon be mutiny in the camp.

So, if we are to be good soldiers, we must follow our Banner unquestioningly wherever He leads, knowing that however fierce the fight, He will bring us to victory. He knows just how much we are able to do, and is ready to help the moment we need His aid. Let us fight on bravely then, for "the Lord is our banner."

THE CHILDREN'S "LITTLE BIT."

So shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.—Exod. xviii. 22.

ONE day after Moses had brought the children of Israel into the wilderness of Sinai a visitor arrived to see him. We all like to have friends coming to stay with us—especially if they are nice—and I think Moses must have been very glad to see this friend, for he went to meet him when he saw him coming and gave him a warm welcome.

The visitor was his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. After they had shaken hands and kissed each other—as men do in the East when they meet—and had asked each other how they were, they began to talk of all they had done since they last met. Of course Moses told Jethro all the wonderful things that God had done for the children of Israel—how He had brought them out of the land of Egypt and through the Red Sea and had delivered them out of the hand of Pharaoh.

The next day Moses held a sort of law court. All those who had quarrels came to him to have them settled. Perhaps an Israelite would say to him: "That man there digged a pit and left it open. My ass fell into it and broke his legs, and I had to kill the beast. Make him pay me damages!" Then the other man would reply: "Well, your ass had no business wandering about in my property. I didn't invite him there! If he chose to break his legs, it's no concern of mine, and I won't pay a halfpenny for him." And so on it would go from early morning till late at night.

Now it is one of the most exhausting things to settle other people's quarrels, and by evening Moses was utterly worn out. Of course, he couldn't judge all the people at once, so some of them had to wait till the end of the day, and *they* got cross, and tired, and disagreeable.

Jethro had been watching what was going on, and he was a sensible man; so he suggested to Moses a better way of doing things. He said, "My dear Moses, this will never do! You are just wearing yourself out, and you can't possibly do everything well when you attempt such a lot. Besides, you are tiring the people by keeping them standing about here all day long. If God wills it, choose out several good, capable, honest men to settle the small matters. They can bring the big matters to you so that you can judge them. They will help you to bear your burden, and you will be able to get through the day's work."

You will be glad to hear that Moses took Jethro's good advice, and that the plan was a great success.

Now we can't all be like Moses, but we can all be like his assistants. We may not be able to help in the big ways, but we can help in the small ones.

1. We can help by our *deeds.* We can run messages for mother, we can thread needles for granny, whose eyesight isn't what it once was, we can fetch father's slippers and newspaper when he comes home tired from business. We can notice not to slam the door when mother has a headache or leave it open so that granny is in a draught. We can avoid bursting noisily into the nursery when baby is asleep. These are all trifles perhaps, but the doing or not doing of them makes a tremendous difference to the happiness of a household.

2. We can help by our *words.* We can speak a friendly word to a new pupil at school, even though we are feeling a bit shy. We can stick up for our friends when somebody is running them down. We can give the "soft answer" that "turneth away wrath" when we are tempted to reply with "the grievous words" that "stir up anger."

3. And we can help with our *thoughts.* "How can we do that?" you ask. "Thoughts can't make much difference." Oh, but they can!

We can cherish kind thoughts about people. We can look out for the best in them, not the worst, and in so doing we shall help to make them better. We can be loving and sympathetic, and in this way we can help others to bear their troubles.

A tiny girl of five saw her mother sitting before the fire with her eyes closed. At first she thought she was dead, and she was very frightened. "Oh, Mummy, are you dead?" she asked. Mummy replied that she wasn't dead, but had a very bad headache. The little mite left her toys, and ran to the window. She held her tiny hands up against the cold pane until they were quite, quite cold. Then she came and laid them on her mother's brow. This she did over and over again until in answer to her question—"Is your head better now, Mummy?"—Mummy replied, "Oh yes; *much* better, thank you." But it wasn't the little cold hands that had cured the pain. It was the loving thought that had helped to take away the worry that had caused the headache.

Would you like another story? This time it shall be a story about a boy. It is a true story, and the incident happened in the city of Dundee not very long ago.

One bitter Sunday morning in January, a gentleman was going to an early meeting. On his way he passed a certain baker's shop in rather a poor part of the city. This baker was a kind man, and on Sunday morning he gave away to the poor children of the district the stale bread that was left over on Saturday night.

When the gentleman passed along the children were waiting outside the shop till it should open. Among them he saw some boys and girls belonging to his Sunday school class. He noticed that one small boy—usually a ring-leader in all sorts of mischief—

wore no coat. A bitter north-east wind was blowing, and the little fellow, looking very cold and blue, was turning somersaults to keep himself warm.

The gentleman asked Johnnie where his coat was, but received no reply. He repeated the question, but the only answer was another somersault. Then he asked a small girl—"Where is Johnnie's coat?" She jerked her thumb towards the baker's doorstep, where a little cripple girl was comfortably ensconced—"Thon's it wee Jeanie's sittin' on!" she said.

He was only a little ragged street boy, but he was one of the world's most perfect gentlemen. For, all unwittingly, he had learned the great truth that Jesus taught—"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

A PECULIAR TREASURE.

Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me.—Exod. xix. 5.

Nowadays when we call a thing "peculiar" we generally mean that it is queer or odd. But the older meaning of peculiar is *particular, very special.* So instead of speaking of a "peculiar" treasure, we might say a "very special" treasure.

I wonder what your treasures are? Most boys and girls have treasures. Many boys carry theirs in their pockets, and a wonderful collection they are! If you asked one of these treasure-keepers to turn out his pockets you would probably find something like this —half a dozen marbles, a bit of string, a water-pistol, a pen-knife, a few nuts and a handkerchief that once was white.

Some boys and girls make collections of shells and seaweeds when they go to the seaside. Others collect wild-flowers and press them. I knew one boy who started a museum of his own which he filled with all sorts of curious things. Many of you count your books or your toys treasures.

But among your treasures there is probably something which you value above all the rest. It is your very special treasure. Perhaps it is a three-bladed knife, or a favourite doll, or a particular book. If you are very small it may be a golliwog or a teddy-bear. Perhaps it is a live thing—a canary, or a kitten, or a dog, or a rabbit. Whatever it is, you love it more than all the rest of your possessions, and you would part with anything rather than with it.

I once knew a little girl whose special treasure was an indiarubber doll. When she was scarcely three she found it one day on the links of a seaside resort. Rain had come on suddenly, and she was being hurried home when she saw the poor old doll lying neglected on the ground. Perhaps some other child had dropped it in running for shelter; perhaps some baby had thrown it out of its perambulator. In any case, dolly's owner could not be found, and the little girl was allowed to keep it.

It was a very plain-looking dolly. Its eyes had once been blue and its cheeks red, but most of the paint had been washed or scratched off. It had once possessed a squeak, but the squeak had vanished. It was dressed in homely fashion in a red crochet dress and a red crochet bonnet.

The little girl had other dolls—china beauties with silky flaxen hair and lovely clothes. One was a bride doll, another a real sailor-boy. But of all her children she loved the rubber baby best. Other dolls came and went, but through the years she remained faithful to it. She is quite grown up now, but still she has a tender spot in her heart for the rubber dolly.

Your fathers and mothers have their treasures too.

Perhaps your mother has some pretty dresses and some beautiful jewels. You have seen her wear them when she was going to a party, and you may have thought that these were her special treasures. But if you had asked her, I think she would have smiled. For what do you think mother's special treasures are? Just her boys and girls!

And our Heavenly Father has His "peculiar" treasures too. What are God's very special treasures? Perhaps one of you guesses "the stars." You go out on a clear night and see them sparkling in the sky like thousands of jewels. They look so beautiful that you think God must value them very much. Yes, but there is something more precious in God's sight than the stars.

Somebody else guesses "the sun." He looks so big and glorious. Well, there is something God values more than the sun.

Then you remember the flowers. You think of their beautiful colours, and their sweet perfumes, and you try to imagine what the world would be like without them. Yes, certainly, of all that He has made, God must love these most. But you are wrong again. There is something God loves better than the flowers.

Do you give it up? Well, God's very special treasures are boys and girls and men and women. All the world is His, and the sun and the moon and the stars, but more than all these things He loves the children whom He has created. They are so dear to

Him that He sent His only Son into the world to die for them.

But they can't be really and truly His treasures unless they give themselves to Him. Wise men tell us that the Hebrew word translated "a peculiar treasure" really means a treasure or possession that is *specially one's own.* There are some things that you share with others, there are other things that are specially your own—your own little bit of garden, your own little bedroom, your very own books and toys.

And God wants you to be "specially His own." His great loving Father-heart is aching and longing to have your love. You belong to Him by right and He could claim you and take you by force. But such a possession would be of little value to Him because He knows that in your heart you would not be really His. So He leaves you free to choose.

Boys and girls, God's love is calling to you all and yearning after you. Will you come of your own accord and say: "Dear God, I want to be specially your own. Take me and keep me and love me for ever and ever"?

And He will do it.

BORED EARS.

I love my master . . . I will not go out free.—Exod. xxi. 5.

In country places you may have noticed sheep marked on the fleece with marks or letters showing to whom they belonged. In countries where men are kept as slaves something like this has been done even to them. They have been branded with hot irons so that if they ran away they might easily be caught and given back to their masters. They could never hope to escape, because they were marked for life.

Among the people of Israel, in ancient times, a man who was free-born might become a slave for a time and then be released. If he had run into debt and was unable to pay it, or if he had committed a crime against someone, he might have to go and work as a slave till he had done work enough to pay his debt, or had atoned for his crime.

But he could not be kept a slave for ever. Every seventh year, which was called the year of Jubilee, such slaves must be allowed "to go out free for nothing." But it sometimes happened that the man who was a slave had grown fond of his master. When the year of Jubilee came he did not wish to go and leave what was now a home to him, he wished to stay.

So there was a law which enabled him to stay if he liked.

But he had to go through a certain ceremony. His master took him to the judges, and when the slave had said before them that he did not wish to be free, his master led him up to the door or doorpost. The slave's ear was laid against the post and the master took an awl and pushed the sharp point through the ear into the wood. After that he could never leave his master again. He had made his choice, and the mark in his ear was the token of it. He was a member of the household as long as he lived.

But there was now a difference in the man's feeling toward his work. It is one thing to do a piece of work because you are compelled to do it, and quite another to do it because you choose. It is liking the work that makes labour light. Above all, it is love for those for whom you work. It was only love for his master that would induce the slave to give up his freedom and serve him for ever.

1. Yes, there are just two things which make work easy. The first is *love of the work.*—Listen to this story.

It was an Autumn afternoon, and the leaves red and gold and lemon-coloured were falling thick on the garden paths and on the lawns. The gardener was busy tying up some chrysanthemums, and the gardener's boy was still busier, standing with his hands in his pockets watching his father.

"See here, Sonny!" said the gardener. "Get a move on, and rake up these leaves!"

"Not me!" politely replied the boy, lounging against a wall. "I'm about as tired as they make 'em. And besides, I've got a skinned heel."

"After you have raked up the leaves," went on the gardener, taking no notice of the boy's remarks, "you can make a bonfire of them, and jump over it."

"Hooray!" cried the boy, beginning to shout and leap. "Where's that old rake?"

You see the bonfire and the jolly blaze and the jumping made all the difference.

2. The second thing that makes work easy is *love for the person for whom you work.*—You know that at school. You know how much keener you are to learn your lessons for the teacher you love. To please that teacher you will work twice as hard as you would if you didn't care for him.

Let me tell you another story. It is a war story, but not a story of the war you remember. It is a story of the war that took place when your grandfather and grandmother were about the age you are now. History books call it the Crimean War. It was a terrible war, and what made it most terrible was that there were no fine hospitals such as we have now, and no white-aproned, white-capped nurses to attend properly to the wounded.

One woman in England couldn't bear to think of all this misery. She managed to get permission to go to the war area, and she took bandages and dressings and food for the poor wounded fellows. She worked as perhaps no woman since has worked to bring comfort and ease and healing to the soldiers.

You know her name. She died not so long ago, an old, old lady. Her real name was Florence Nightingale, but those who were her patients, and who loved her very shadow, called her "the Lady of the Lamp." If you want to know why, ask father or mother when you go home.

And now, here comes the point of my story. She did not fight her brave battle against disease and death quite alone. She had several helpers, and I want to tell you of one.

His name was Stafford O'Brien. He was a splendid young fellow who was a tremendous favourite with his friends in London. He was leading a life of ease and comfort, but he left London's gaieties and pleasures and went out to the war-stricken Crimea. He slaved there day and night for months and months, doing anything and everything, fetching and carrying—"fagging" as he called it—for love and admiration of the noble woman who was doing such noble work. His London friends would have been astonished could they have seen him sometimes. But he was only too proud to do his trying work. To him it was an honour and a privilege because it was dictated by love.

Boys and girls, we must get a little of Stafford O'Brien's spirit, a little of the spirit of the slave with the bored ear, if we wish to serve God and man. We must love our fellow-men before we can serve them truly. And we must love God first of all. That will make work for others a joy and pleasure. Why? Because we shall know that when we are serving them we are most really serving God.

THE RIGHT KIND OF MEMORY.

Ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.—Exod. xxiii. 9.

TO-DAY I want to speak about the right kind of memory, because although the memory is not a thing we can see and touch like the hand, or the ear, or the tongue, yet it has a very important part to play in our life.

It is a splendid thing to have a good memory. The boys and girls who possess such a thing should consider themselves very fortunate. It will be a great help to them through life and make many things easier for them. Yes, it is a splendid thing to have a good memory; but it is a better thing to have the right kind of memory.

What do we mean by the right kind of memory? Well, some people seem to remember the things they ought to forget, and to forget the things they ought to remember. They remember all the little insults and injuries they have received from others. They count them over and feel very badly used and very sorry for themselves. Indeed they seem to take a positive pleasure in doing so. And those are very often the people who forget the good that they have received—they forget to be grateful.

This is not the kind of memory you would wish to have. The right kind of memory *remembers to forget.* It remembers to forget all the little injuries and insults that do not matter. It remembers to forget itself. And the right kind of memory, above all things, *remembers to remember.* It remembers to remember others.

Now in our text the Israelites were reminded to remember. They were told to remember the strangers who came among them, to be kind and hospitable to them, because once they too had been strangers in the land of Egypt. Sometimes, in those days, strangers were not treated very kindly. They were looked upon as outsiders and were given no rights. Often people tried to get out of them as much as they could and to give back as little as possible. Now the Israelites had had a very hard time in the land of Egypt. They had been oppressed and overworked and persecuted. They knew all about the disadvantages of being strangers and so they were told to be kind to the strangers who came to their land for the sake of all the hard things they had once endured.

I wonder if you have ever been a stranger in a strange land? Have you ever known what it is to be an outsider? Have you ever gone to a new school and felt out in the cold? The other boys and girls had their own interests; they were all friendly with each other; each had his or her special chum, and there seemed to be no room for you. If this has happened to you, then when you get to know the others and are taken into their circle, be kind to the new pupils who come after you. Speak to them, try to make them feel at home, for you have known "the heart of a stranger."

It is those who have been in trouble themselves who know and understand best how to help other people out of their troubles. Let me tell you two stories.

Once a cripple was hobbling down a city street with the aid of two canes, and he stopped at a corner to knock a banana-skin off the pavement with one of his canes. Three well persons stood near, but not one of them had thought of removing the skin. Do you know why the cripple bothered about it? He had broken his hip by slipping on a banana-skin a few years previously, and he did not want others to suffer as he had done. That is the first story.

Here is the other. One day a lady was visiting an infirmary in a large city. In one bed was a boy about sixteen years of age. She went to speak to him and he lifted the corner of the bed-clothes a little bit. What do you think was underneath? Just a baby boy about two years old. The young fellow explained that he himself had a club foot which had been operated on some days previously. This baby had just come in for the same operation, and he had begged the nurse to let him have the little mite beside him in bed. There he was—nursing it as tenderly as any mother and trying to make it forget its troubles.

It is those who have suffered themselves who know best how to sympathize. But don't wait to suffer before beginning to sympathize. You can all begin this very day. It just requires a little thought for others. A smile, a kind word, will not cost you much, but they may make all the difference in the world to the person on whom they are bestowed. And some day you will hear the glad welcome of One who ever made it His business to cheer the lonely, and comfort the sad—"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for . . . I was a stranger, and ye took me in."[1]

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[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are 1 Sam. iii. 10; Ps. xxiv. 4 (2), xxxiv. 13; Prov. vi. 13; Mal. i. 13; Luke vi. 41; 1 Pet. iii. 4, v. 5.

A BROIDERED COAT.

A broidered coat (RV 'a coat of chequer work').—Exod. xxviii. 4.

A BROIDERED coat! Such was one of the garments Aaron was commanded to wear when he went in to minister before the Lord in the Holy Place. I wonder what it was like! Clever people who know about such things tell us that the word translated "broidered" should really read "of chequer work," and if you look up the Revised Version of the Bible you will find that that is how it is written there. The coat may have been made of some stuff woven with different coloured threads, or it may have had a honeycomb pattern on it. In any case it was very wonderful and the finest that could be made.

There is not a little girl in church who does not know about Sunday clothes. You know how careful you have to be not to get them stained or soiled, and how careful mother is to hang them up in the wardrobe or lay them away in a drawer. The old idea of having Sunday clothes was a good one, but, girls, we should not call them "holy garments" nowadays, should we?

If you ever go to India, you will see that the veiled ladies there have special garments in which they go to worship. They wear a *sari* of a particular colour—it may be fawn, it may be white; and if there is embroidery on it, the workmanship will be exquisite. They regard that *sari* as being quite different from their festal garments. It is a holy garment.

What was really the idea in Aaron having a broidered coat? The Israelites were being trained to think of the great God as their King—a King holy beyond their understanding and invisible to their mortal eyes. They believed that in some wonderful way He was in the Holy of Holies, and that he who ventured in there must have beautiful raiment of exquisite workmanship. It would satisfy them in a manner, and make their idea of God seem all the more real, when they saw the priest going in to pray for them, wearing a coat that they themselves had woven.

But Jesus Christ came to this world with a beautiful message. It was that the poorest worshipper might enter the Holy of Holies. There was no further need for the priest with the broidered coat. In His sight the garments of a poor woman or a poor little girl who loved Him were more beautiful than the most elaborately woven priestly coat.

One day, speaking to a great audience on a mountain-side, He startled many of His hearers by proclaiming the laws of His new kingdom. They were laws that could be understood by the simplest and least educated of the people. They had to do just with people's hearts—the hearts of those who could be humble, or who longed to be good. Some who listened to Him were first astonished and then angry, for they were very proud of broidered coats, and other things of the same kind. No! they would not listen to Jesus Christ. And, do you wonder? It must have been galling for men with proud hearts to hear Jesus saying that those who would enter the Kingdom of Heaven must become as little children.

Boys and girls, Christ had a special message for you. He loved children. And when you say your prayers in real earnest, it is like a child speaking to a father; you enter the Holy of Holies.

What, then, is the meaning of preaching about a broidered coat at all? I once knew two very interesting boys belonging to one family. They had heard a great deal about Jesus Christ in their home, and one of them—the older of the two—came to be spoken of in the country village where they lived as a young Christian. The other boy was not a great favourite. He was less winning in his manner; some people spoke of him as "dour." But years afterwards the "dour" boy was doing good work in the world, while the genial one had come to be referred to as "poor Dick." Dick had lived in a slack, careless way, while his quieter, less confident brother had been patiently working at his broidered coat. Can you guess what I mean?

From my window I can see every morning children at play. There is one boy I notice specially; he has a very bad temper. He constantly quarrels with his companions. If he grows up without curbing that temper, don't you think he will be a very disagreeable man? And I see little girls disobedient when their mothers call them to go into the house. If that boy and those little girls are ever to be good men and women—good citizens—they must work every day at their broidered coat which is *their character*. It will take a great deal of going into the Holy Place, and it will mean an everyday fight with the evil that is in their hearts.

But take heart, dear children! Jesus Christ is the friend of boys and girls; and if you ask Him He will help you to be good—to weave your broidered coat.

KNOWN BY NAME.

I know thee by name.—Exod. xxxiii. 17.

In Macedonia they have a curious custom. When a baby is about to be baptized there is just one person in the world who knows its name. That person is its godfather.

The father and mother stay at home on the day of the christening and the nurse carries the baby to the church door. There she is met by the godfather, who takes the infant from her and carries it up to the priest in the nave. The priest repeats a prayer, after which he asks, "What is the name of the child?" Then, and not till then, does the godfather reveal the secret.

Immediately the name is made known some boys run with the news as fast as they can to the home of the baby's parents. They, you may be sure, are waiting very impatiently to hear what their little one is to be called.

This queer custom has arisen out of a strange superstition. In the old, dark days, the people of Macedonia believed that a child was not under the protection of God until it was baptized, and that, on account of this, an unchristened infant was specially liable to come under the power of demons and witches. The danger was not great so long as the name was not known, but if the demon or witch once learned the name of the child it was easy to lay a spell on it. For this reason one friend was entrusted to choose the name and to keep it a dead secret until the baby was brought to church.

I don't know whether there was ever a similar superstition in Scotland, but you will still find quite a number of people there who think it unlucky to tell you baby's name before he is christened.

Now in our text God says to Moses, "I know thee by name." Perhaps that doesn't seem very wonderful to us, because Moses was a very great man and the leader of God's chosen people. But there is something much more wonderful than that—God knows *you* and *me* by name. Out of the millions and millions of boys and girls on the earth—brown ones and black ones, red ones and yellow ones and white ones—He knows you by name, just as if you were the only boy or girl on earth.

And when God says, "I know thee by name," it means much more than "I know thy name." That is all the length the Macedonian godfathers can go, but God can go much further. "I know thee by name" means that God knows all about you. He knows about your home, and your school, and your companions. He knows about your joys and pleasures. He knows about your difficulties and troubles and temptations. And just because He knows you so well and loves you so much He is able to help you in them all and sympathize with you.

There was a little boy once who didn't realize this. He had been taken to see King Edward's funeral and he had been greatly interested in it.

After he was safely in bed that night his mother went upstairs to tuck him in, as all good mothers do. And she asked him a question which good mothers sometimes have to ask their small bad sons—"Freddy, did you say your prayers?" Freddy gave a sigh. "No, mother, I didn't," he said. "It wouldn't be any use to-night. God can't attend to *me*. He's far too busy unpacking the King!"

God is never too busy to attend to boys and girls. He is never too busy to attend to any one. There is room in His great loving heart for everybody.

> Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
> And thy Maker is not by:
> Think not thou canst weep a tear,
> And thy Maker is not near.[1]

Yes, and think not you can laugh a laugh of pure joy and God is not beside you to join in your gladness.

But there is something else God knows about you. He knows your capabilities. He has given you powers and talents and He knows what you are able to do. He wants you to make the very best of yourself because He loves you.

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[1] Blake, *Songs of Innocence*, 48.

And the way to do that is to take these powers back to Him, and ask Him to teach you how to use them so that you may serve Him, so that you may grow braver and stronger and nobler every day, so that you may help and bless others.

A SHINING FACE.

Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone.—Exod. xxxiv. 29.

HAVE you ever seen a picture of a statue of Moses chiselled by the great Italian sculptor and painter, Michael Angelo? It is one of the artist's greatest statues. More than that, it is one of the greatest statues in the world. It shows us Moses as he is returning from Mount Sinai after receiving from God the Ten Commandments. He holds the tables of stone clasped in his right hand and arm. His face is beautiful and majestic, but very stern, and you can tell from its expression that he has seen what has been happening during his absence on Mount Sinai. He has just discovered the golden calf, which the poor foolish children of Israel had made, and which they were worshipping as a god. You can easily imagine Moses breaking these tables of stone in his wrath and disgust at the faithlessness of the people.

That is one face of Moses. Our text describes another. You know that we all have several faces, and some days we wear one and some days another. To-day we may wear a face that is sulky or angry, and to-morrow we may wear one that is happy or smiling. This other face of Moses was so strangely beautiful that the Hebrews, gazing on it, whispered to each other, "Look! He has been with God!"

Boys and girls, you all want to have beautiful faces—at least I have still to meet the boy or girl who would like to be ugly—and to-day I am going to tell you how to have a *really* beautiful face. You have often heard people say that beauty is only "skin deep." But the beauty for which I am going to give you the recipe is not skin deep.

It is deeper than skin deep. It is so deep that no accident, or illness, or chance, or age can mar its loveliness. It is the beauty that is heart deep. It is the beauty that shines on the face of those who so love God that they are often with Him, speaking to Him and communing with Him. They live in His presence and they try to do what they feel He would like. They are always doing some loving deed for another, for they know that loving their brother on earth is one of the best ways of loving God. Their features may not be faultless; their nose may be snub and their mouth may be too wide, but you never remember these things when you look at them. You know only that their faces are faces you love to look upon, for tenderness and sympathy and love are shining there.

A good many years ago there was born in Russia a boy who thought himself so ugly that he felt there was no happiness for such as he. He had a wide nose, thick lips, small grey eyes, and big hands and feet. When he grew to be a man he became a famous writer. In one of his books he tells that he was so anxious about this ugliness that he besought God to work a miracle, to turn him into a beauty. If God would do this the boy promised that he would give God all he then possessed, or would possess in the future.

That Russian boy was the great Count Tolstoi. Happily as he grew older he discovered that the beauty for which he sighed was not the only beauty, nor the best beauty. He learned to value more the beauty of a character strong and great and good in God's sight.

One word more. Did you notice that the text said, "Moses wist not"? "Wist" is a quaint word which has now gone out of use. It is the third person singular of an old Anglo-Saxon verb to "wit," which just meant to "know." So Moses knew not that his face shone. The people looking at him saw it, but he himself was quite unconscious of the shining.

That is like beauty of heart. It is always unconscious. The boy or girl who says, "I shall be kind to So-and-so," or, "I shall do such-and-such because people will take notice of it and say, 'Look at Johnny! Isn't he a generous boy?' or, 'Look at Winnie! Isn't she a sweet girl?'"—that boy will never have real beauty of heart, and that girl's face will never shine with genuine beauty of soul. Instead they will gradually get a self-conscious look, a look that tells they are acting a part. No! People who pretend to be loving or gentle or sympathetic for the sake of appearance never have the truly beautiful face which comes from real heart beauty.

The only way to get that beauty is to forget yourself, to think so much of God and your fellow-men that you have no room left in your thoughts for a little selfish self.

Then your face will shine, though you know it not, with a radiance not so very unlike that which shone on the face of Moses.

Once I knew a little girl,
    Very plain;
You might try her hair to curl,
    All in vain;
On her cheek no tints of rose,
Paled and blushed, or sought repose;
    She was plain.

But the thoughts that through her brain
    Came and went,
As a recompense for pain,
    Angels sent;
So full of many a beauteous thing,
In her young soul blossoming,
    Gave content.

Every thought was full of grace
    Pure and true;
And in time the homely face
    Lovelier grew;
With a Heavenly radiance bright,
From the soul's reflected light,
    Shining through.

So I tell you, little child,
Plain or poor,
If your thoughts are undefiled,
You are sure
Of the loveliness of worth,
And this beauty, not of earth,
Will endure.

"GOOD INSIDE."

Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood . . . and he overlaid it with pure gold within and without.—Exod. xxxvii. 1, 2.

I WONDER how many little girls here are like one whom I once knew? She was bright, with rosy cheeks and dark eyes. She delighted in the colours of things; furthermore she liked to be prettily dressed. But—but her mother told me she had a very bad fault. She would know there was a hole, say, in her stocking—you all know that stocking holes come very easily—but instead of trying to mend it, or getting someone else to do it, she would put the stocking on, saying to herself, "No one will notice it, if I push the hole well down into my shoe." When she looked into the mirror, of course no hole was visible.

Then I had a boy friend. Everybody liked him, he had such pleasant manners; but—but if his father asked him to do any work, like raking the garden-paths or weeding the flower-beds, his raking and his weeding were what we call "scamped" work. It could not stand being looked into. One thing this boy could do well—draw funny faces cleverly. People used to advise his father to make him an artist. He *might* have made a good one, but I doubt it; for a real artist must first of all learn to take infinite pains.

I have a special artist in my mind. He was a great painter, and his name was George Frederick Watts. It is told of him that he had a habit of reminding his servants that even their smallest duties ought to be performed with the utmost care. Sometimes he added three words of counsel—"Remember the daisies." What did that mean, do you think? It meant that one of the tiniest and commonest works of nature was exquisitely finished, and therefore the most trivial duties one gets to do, ought never to be ignored or slurred over. To George Frederick Watts the humblest and the highest duties were as one—each was just a little bit of his life; and to live that life aright was, he considered, the greatest work that had been given him to do. Some day he hoped that God would be able to say of it, "Behold, it was very good."

Now, I like to think of this Bezalel in the Old Testament as being an artist rather than a craftsman who simply worked to order. What a wonderful catalogue of his works we have in Exodus! And there is no more interesting item mentioned in it than the chest called the "Ark of the Covenant." I believe that, like Watts with his painting and with his life, Bezalel felt the eye of God upon him as he made the Ark. It was going to be placed in quite a dark room; only the high priest would see it, and that but once a year—even then but the outside of it. But Bezalel knew that God would see it all, and he overlaid the Ark with pure gold within and without.

Some people have an impression that artists never take trouble over things, and are satisfied if they are able to produce a certain effect with their pictures. There are, of course, careless artists as well as good ones, just as there are good and bad ordinary people. But I know this, that a really great artist thinks—thinks, remember—before he gives even one touch with his brush or one cut with his chisel.

The early religious sculptors, preparing themselves for their task by prayer, and gazing on beautiful things, would put no imperfect work out of their hands, even when so placed that it could not possibly be seen; and when questioned why the concealed parts of statues, removed from human sight, should be so exquisitely wrought, they said that the eyes of the gods were there.

Now, every one of us is an artist, and we have been given what is called a commission by the great God. It is to live our lives—to make our arks. And, boys and girls, even the youngest among you has begun. God will see the work when it is finished. He sees it now, and has wonderful patience with our mistakes, for we constantly add touches that grieve Him. But I feel sure that in your hearts, not one of you would wish to spoil your ark altogether. You hope that some day God will be able to say that it is good.

A little Scotch girl was taken to church on a communion Sabbath. Her mother went with her to the gallery that she might see the solemn service. When she got home she pondered by the fireside, and after a little said, "Mother, I would like to wear a white frock next time Jesus is in the church, and I'm going to try to be good inside."

Little folks do get an inkling of the right thing sometimes. And Jesus is very willing to help them when they try to put in the gold lining—to be "good inside." If you keep company with Jesus Christ, boys and girls, you will be "good inside."

THE PRIEST'S CROWN.

And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing, like the engravings of a signet, HOLY TO THE LORD.—Exod. xxxix. 30.

THE first crown we read about in the Bible is the holy crown which the high priest carried on his forehead. On his head the high priest wore a sort of turban formed of several yards of pure linen wound round and round. Over this turban the crown was fastened. It consisted of a narrow plate of gold on which were engraved the words—"HOLY TO THE LORD." Attached to the plate was a band or lace of blue material which was passed round the head and knotted behind. The band kept the plate in place.

The interesting bit about the priest's crown was the inscription—"HOLY TO THE LORD." That word "HOLY" just means "set apart." The high priest was "set apart" for God's service just as the Sabbath day was "set apart" for God's worship. He stood for the people before God.

Now you know that we no longer need any earthly high priest. Jesus has become our great High Priest once for all. He has offered Himself up a Sacrifice for us all and He pleads our cause with God our

Father. Still, each of us may wear the high priest's crown, and I think that crown is placed on our foreheads at three different times.

1. First of all it is placed on our heads when we are given to God in baptism. I wonder if you boys and girls have ever thought of that. You are all "HOLY TO THE LORD." When you were very tiny, too tiny and helpless to be able to speak or think, your parents gave you to God. And so you really belong to Him, you are His boys and girls, set apart for Him. I think if we remembered that more often it would help to keep us straight when we are tempted to do things that are mean, or unworthy, or spiteful.

2. But it is not enough to let our parents put this crown on our head. God wants each of us to put it on with our own hands. There comes a time when we are able to think and choose for ourselves, and then we have to make up our minds whether we are to wear the crown for life or throw it away; whether we are to be God's servants, helping to make the world brighter, and braver, and better, and more beautiful, or—just nothing at all.

Now a great many people who have tried to wear this crown have failed to understand the inscription. There were the monks and hermits of old, who thought that to be set apart for God meant to be set apart from the world. And some of them shut themselves up in cells and lived their days saying prayers and reading good books. Of course these were both very good things to do, but outside their cells the great weary world ached and sorrowed, and they did nothing to soothe its pain or comfort its sorrow. The little flowers lifted their bright faces to the sunshine, the little birds sang their songs of praise and joy, but these men were too busy trying to make *themselves* holy to have time to brighten the world that Jesus came to help and heal. Of course there were good monks, too, whose names live still for their deeds of charity and blessing, but these are not the ones we are thinking about.

Then there were other people who thought that to be holy meant that you must torture your body. Such a man was St. Simeon Stylites, who lived for many years on the top of a pillar and who at last was found dead there of starvation and exhaustion.

And there were others (perhaps some of them are still with us) who imagined that to be holy meant to pull a long face, or pretend that they were much better than anybody else.

Now in none of these things does holiness consist. God does not ask you to shut yourself away from the world, He does not ask you to torture your body, He does not expect you to look solemn and sad. Being "set apart" for God means that you are to make the very best of yourself, that you are to use your hands, and your feet, and your tongues, and your brains, and your laughter to serve God and help other people.

3. But last of all God puts this crown on our heads.

In the last chapter of the Bible there is a beautiful verse which describes God's servants in heaven, and this is what it says: "And they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads." And that means not only that we shall belong to God but that we shall be like Him.

There is a beautiful legend which has come down to us of how once, when Jesus was here among men, He sat with His disciples round a fire in an open street. And John, the beloved disciple, took a piece of charcoal and traced the outline of his Master's shadow where it was thrown on the wall of a house.

Next day many people stopped to look at the outline on the wall, and various were the conjectures as to whom it represented. One man was certain it was the picture of a shoemaker and he pointed to the crooked back. But his neighbour contradicted him. 'Nay," he said, "it is the likeness of a fruit-vendor though the basket has been left out. Look at the parted lips. He is crying his wares."

Then a learned Pharisee came past. "Ah," he said, "what a fine brow this man has, the brow of a thinker! I believe someone has been trying to make a portrait of *me*. Yes, I'm sure that is my likeness."

At length a man passed that way—a humble man with a strong, tender face, with kind eyes, and a beautiful smile. And he, too, stopped to look at the picture. He marked the noble brow, the meekness of the figure; then he spoke aloud: "Oh, if only one could come to look like that; but that would be impossible!"

And as he stood there a hush fell on the crowd and they drew back, pointing to him. For, without knowing it, the stranger had resembled the picture. He had lived a Christlike life, and so he had come to look like Jesus.

Boys and girls, if we try to live like Jesus—and that is the only truly holy life—then not only His name, but His likeness shall be printed on our foreheads, and God will perfect that likeness when we see Him face to face.[1]

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[1] The texts of the other sermons in this series are 2 Kings xi. 12, John xix. 2, 1 Cor. ix. 25.

WHEN SILENCE IS GOLDEN.

Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people.—Lev. xix. 16.

TELL-TALE-TIT, your tongue shall be slit,
And all the doggies in the town shall have a little bit!

That is not a very nice verse, but it is made up about not very nice people—the people who cannot control their own tongues.

Most of you dislike tale-bearers exceedingly, and many of you would rather suffer punishment when you are innocent than tell the name of the real offender. Well, that is just splendid; but there is another kind of tale-bearing which we are all much more ready to take part in, and that is telling tales about each other to each other, picking holes in our neighbour's character behind his back.

It is about this kind of tale-bearing that I want to speak to-day. There is a word for it, a very nasty word—the word "slander." Perhaps it never occurred to you that you were a "slanderer" when you indulged in this kind of tale-bearing—it seems such a horrid thing—but that is just what you were—nothing less.

Do you know what a tale-bearer is called in the

Book of Proverbs? He is called a whisperer. I think that is a very good name. When you see two little girls going along the street speaking in low voices with their heads close together you will often find that they are telling tales about some other girl or about their teacher. Whether you wish it or not, you can't help hearing scraps of their conversation as you pass them; for every now and then they forget and raise their voices. This is the sort of thing your hear—"And do you know what she said? . . . And wasn't it mean? . . . And would you have done such a thing?"

I want you to think very hard about tale-bearing, because it is a thing people don't think enough about. They don't think how much harm they are doing. Tale-bearers are hurting themselves, they are hurting the people who are listening to them, they are hurting the people about whom they are telling stories, and they are hurting Jesus.

1. *They are hurting themselves.*—They are allowing themselves to become hard, and unkind, and perhaps untruthful. For tale-bearing often leads to exaggeration and tale-telling. You are telling a spicy story about somebody else, and you can't resist inventing a little bit yourself just to make it more exciting. Then the person to whom you have told the story repeats it to someone else, and the little bit you have added is passed on as true.

There was a good woman called Hannah More, who used to have a splendid cure for slander. Whenever anyone told her an unkind story about a neighbour she said, "Come with me now, and we will go and inquire if this is true." Often the story-teller would say, "Thank you, I'd rather not. There may be some mistake." But she always insisted upon their coming with her at once.

If there were more people like Hannah More in the world there would be far less slander.

2. And then tale-bearers are *hurting the people who listen to their tales.*—They are poisoning their minds and helping them to think unkindly of their friends. They are helping to turn *them* into tale-bearers too. For if you hear a spicy story, your first inclination is to go and tell it to somebody else.

And when a story once starts, you never can tell where it will end.

Once a woman came to Saint Philip Neri and confessed that she had said unkind and untrue things about her neighbours. Saint Philip told her to go to the market and buy a chicken that had been newly killed, and then to walk along the road plucking the feathers as she went. When she had done this, he told her to go back and pick them all up again. Of course she said that was impossible, and Saint Philip answered, "Ah then! remember that just so is it with your words. After you have once spoken them, they are scattered hither and thither, and you can never get them back again."

You may go back and tell your friend you are sorry about that unkind tale you repeated and that you did not mean what you said. But the harm has already been done. His mind has been poisoned and the story has been started on its mad career. The best way is never to start it.

3. Again, tale-bearers are *hurting the people they are slandering.*—They are perhaps doing so much damage to their character that other people will cease to trust them. In any case the story-tellers are helping those they slander to be worse, not better. They are putting stumbling-blocks in their path, and it is a terrible thing to put a stumbling-block in anybody's path.

A great French writer—Victor Hugo—tells the story of a poor convict who, when he left prison, made up his mind he would lead a better life. But he found it impossible. And what do you think was the reason? Whenever he got a situation someone told tales about him, and he had to leave it.

Tale-bearing is one of the most cruel things. It separates friends, it spoils reputations, it hardens hearts. Do you think discussing your neighbour's faults with others is going to make him any better? If you really wanted to help him you would go to him and tell him his mistake kindly and alone. Or, better still, you would let him know that you knew he was capable of higher things. You would let him know that you believed in him and trusted him still, and that it wasn't his real self but an inferior bad self that had done those wicked things that people were talking about.

4. But last of all and worst of all, tale-bearers *hurt Jesus Christ.*—They hurt Him because they are hurting themselves. They hurt Him because they are hurting others. Jesus always thinks the best of people and appeals to the best. And do you fancy it is nothing to Him when we hurt any of the children whom He loves? Would it be nothing to your mother if one of your friends hurt you?

Don't be a tale-bearer, then. Try instead to be a tale-stopper. Try to say good about anyone who is being slandered.

There is a verse in Proverbs which says: "For lack of wood the fire goeth out: and where there is no whisperer, contention ceaseth." If there is nobody to repeat a bad tale it will die a natural death.

Have you ever had a collecting card sent to you asking you to forward a small sum of money to some charitable object, and to make three or four copies of the card and send them to your friends? At the bottom of the card there are always those words—"Don't break the chain." You know what that means. If you don't give your pennies, and if you don't send on copies of the card to your friends, then *they* won't be able to pass them on to *their* friends, and so on, and the object for which the money is being collected will be a great deal poorer in the end.

But as regards gossip and tale-bearing I would say, *Do* break the chain. Don't pass the story on to *your* friends and they won't be able to pass it on to *their* friends. It isn't easy always to say kind things, and to think kind things, but remember that it is the little mean characters who like to tell tales and pick faults, and the great, noble, loving ones who try to think the best of people.

> Don't look for the flaws as you go through life;
> And even when you find them
> It is wise and kind to be somewhat blind,
> And look for the virtue behind them.
> For the cloudiest night has a hint of light
> Somewhere in its shadow hiding:
> It is better by far to look for a star
> Than the spots on the sun abiding.

THE BABY'S ANTHEM.

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:

The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.—Num. vi. 24, 25, 26.

THESE are familiar words. You know them almost as well as "God save the King." They are like the National Anthem in this respect: they are a prayer for a blessing and—I should like to add—upon a king. You always sing them when a baby is brought to church to be christened. When you join in the familiar little anthem, does it ever dawn upon you that you are praying for very beautiful things to be given to your little brother or sister; and that not only the father and mother, but even you boys and girls, are taking on responsibilities for his or her training?

The other day, I read a lovely story about a baby just like the one that is going to be baptized. A few weeks before he was born, his father, King Mordreth, was killed while hunting; his mother died when he was but a few hours old. She had one very venerable friend and teacher who was said to be the oldest and wisest man in the world. Early that day, she sent for him, and said, "My baby was born a king; only you can help him; take him away to the castle on the mountain crag before he hears the people quarrelling. If he is with you, he will learn what kings should know."

So the old man took the child, folded him in his long grey robe, and strode away through the city, over the plain to a high mountain. From there he could look out on the sea, the sky, and the spreading plains. Evening came, and the sky was lit by myriads of stars—the common world seemed quite far away. He laid the baby down on the soft carpet of scented moss. "The stars are very near," the old man said; "waken, young king, and know they are your brothers. Your brother the wind is bringing to you the breath of your brothers the trees, you are at home." And the little royal Amor (for that was his name) opened his eyes, and when he saw the stars he smiled; although he was not a day old he threw up his small hands, and touched his forehead, as if saluting.

Little Amor lived alone with the Ancient One and a servant quite as old. But these two old people knew a secret that kept them young in spite of their years. They knew that they were the brothers of all things in the world, and that the man who never knows an angry thought can never know a foe.

Each morning they went out to see the sunrise. What a wonderful sight it was to Amor. He threw out his little hands with a shout of joy. And then the Ancient One told him stories of small grains lying hid in the dark earth, waiting for the sun to draw them forth into life; stories of flowers warmed and ripened until they burst into scented blossom; stories of trees, and how the sap was drawn upwards by the heat until great branches waved in the summer air; stories of men, women, and children, walking with light step and glad heart because of the gold of the sun. "Lift your head high," the old man said, "never forget the sun."

And then, one day he showed him the beauty of the clouds. "They are heavy with soft rain," he said; "when they break, they will drop it in showers, or splendid storms, and the thirsty earth will drink it up. The springs will bubble up like crystal, and the brooks will rush babbling through the green of the forest. Men and women will feel rested and cool. Lift your head high when you walk, young king, and often look upward. Never forget the clouds and the storm."

But although Amor loved the sunshine and the clouds, he loved the stars best. "Ah," said the Ancient One, "when a man looks long at them, he grows calm and forgets small things. Hold your soul still, and look upward often, and you will understand when they say, 'Never forget the stars.'"

And, away in that world by himself, Amor never heard an unbeautiful word. The first time he felt angry, he could not understand it. "I loved my horse no longer," he said; "I struck him; was it pain?" "It was a worse thing," the old man told him; "it was anger." And Amor learnt the uselessness of anger—how, when a man indulged in it, he lost his strength, his power over himself and over others. "There is no time for anger in the world," said his teacher. "If you put into your mind a beautiful thought, it will take the place of the evil one. There is no room for darkness in the mind of him who thinks only of the stars."

And the story goes on to tell how Amor lived to be a king who tried to make the lives of people better and to spread happiness in the world.

How is the world to break upon the eyes of this little baby? One night he will notice the stars for the first time. Some morning he will laugh at the sunshine; another he will try to catch the raindrops. In the Anthem, you pray that God will bless and keep him, that when he opens his eyes on the world he will see God's face smiling upon him, and that he will have a beautiful life of peace.

Boys and girls, let it not be from any of you that he will hear the first angry word. Let it not be through you that he will learn there is evil in the world. Try rather to keep his mind on the stars and the sunshine as long as it is possible; and as he grows up show him that there is no time for anger, that there is no time for evil. You will do this best, not by setting yourself to it as to a task, but by keeping your own thoughts on beautiful things—on Jesus Christ. Where Jesus Christ is, evil cannot dwell.

It is a solemn thing to be near a baby—to have one in your own home. It is solemn, but it is the sort of experience that makes grown-up people feel Heaven is not far off. Let us pray for this baby.

LEND YOUR EYES.

Thou shalt be to us instead of eyes.—Num. x. 31.

"THOU shalt be to us instead of eyes." What did Moses mean? He was talking to his father-in-law, and he was trying to persuade him to go with the children of Israel through the wilderness to the Promised Land. Moses' father-in-law had lived all his life in the wilderness. He knew its good places and its bad places. He knew where its best camping-grounds were to be found. He could be an immense help to the wanderers. He could, as Moses said, be "instead of eyes" to them.

Boys and girls, do you know that you too can be "instead of eyes"? Perhaps a story or two will explain how.

I remember a boy—quite a little fellow—whose mother used to ask him every morning: "Willie, what o'clock is it?" And Willie had really no watch. But there was a tower-clock a good way off. His mother could not read the hours on it, but Willie's sharp little eyes could, and Willie told the time to a minute.

And I remember a little girl playing with her doll at a fireside, while her mother stitched, stitched, stitched. Every now and then her mother called, "Nellie, another needle!" And Nellie threaded a fine needle with white thread. "You see, it puts off time if I try to thread them myself," the mother said to me; "but it's not every day I can get Nellie."

The other day I heard of a grown-up girl who could be "instead of eyes." A blind lady came to see me. We chanced to talk of picture galleries, and she told me she had been to see one of the finest picture collections in London. Then, I suppose because she thought I might wonder, she added, "Winifred went with me, she is wonderful when she describes pictures." That blind lady had had the blessing of sight when she was a young girl. She knew what colour meant; and from the description that her seeing friend gave her, she was able to discuss, like an artist, some of the finest modern pictures.

Boys and girls with your bright eyes, you are needed. Even the youngest among you can be of use.

But there is a higher sight than that of the eye, and to-day I want to speak of it as well. The eyes which are set in your face are not the only eyes you possess. You have eyes in your mind; and I want you to use these eyes also to help the world and the older folk in it.

What do I mean by that? Well, you all know that, besides seeing the actual events which take place around you, you see in your mind wonderful pictures of things that might happen or things that you might do. And these pictures seem so real sometimes that you feel they are, to you, even more real than the real happenings. They are marvellous eyes, those eyes of your imagination! Older people dream dreams mostly of "what has been" or "what might have been," but yours is the privilege to dream dreams of "what may be."

"But," you say, "how will dreams of 'what may be' help the world and the older people in it?" They will help in this way—they will make the world better, and they will keep the world young. For I want the eyes of your imagination to see only what is good and pure and noble. And I want you to turn these visions of your mind into actual events. I want you to *do* some, at least, of the splendid things you dream of. I want you to make the noble thoughts noble deeds.

Older people are often tired, the eyes of their imagination are dim; but yours is the fresh vision that can see what may be, and yours is the enthusiasm and the energy that can make dreams real.

So keep your visions, dear children! Hold them fast as the years pass. Then, when you grow old enough, turn them into splendid facts.

HOW TO BE A HERO.

We were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.—Num. xiii. 33.

The Lord is with us: fear them not.—Num. xiv. 9.

To-day I want to tell you three stories. The first is about ten spies, the second is about a little dog, and the third is about a small boy.

1. The ten spies were sent by a great leader—you can call him a general if you like—to spy out a country which God had promised to their nation. They were told to find out what kind of crops grew there, whether the country was well-wooded, what the inhabitants were like, what sort of towns they lived in, and so on.

After forty days the spies returned and gave in their report. There was nothing wrong with the land, they said. In fact it was a very good land indeed. They had brought back a bunch of grapes so large that it had to be carried on a pole between two men. No, there was nothing wrong with the land, but—but—the cities had terribly strong walls, and the country was inhabited by giants—huge creatures who made *them* feel like tiny grasshoppers. Oh, they could never think of facing them—never, never! And the people mustn't think of it either.

Well you know there is nothing more infectious than a panic. And when the people saw how frightened those spies were they grew frightened too. There was the most awful hullabaloo. They wept and they wailed, they wrung their hands and they refused to go a step farther. They even suggested returning to the country they had come from—a country where they had been no better than slaves under a cruel ruler.

The long and the short of it was that they didn't go up into that land—not for forty years, not until a new generation had grown up who were brave enough to venture in.

2. Now for the second story.

If any of you have been to Dublin you may have visited the zoological gardens. And if you visited the zoological gardens, I expect you had a good look at the lions. The Dublin Zoo is rather famed for its lions. They seem to thrive there much better than they do in London.

There was one lioness in the Zoo in Dublin that lived to a great age. And when she grew old she was very much troubled with rats in her cage. The poor thing wasn't so brisk as she once had been, and she couldn't keep out of their way. The little creatures gnawed her and tormented her till she was nearly mad with rage and pain.

The keeper was really sorry for her, and at last he hit upon a plan to deliver her from her tormentors. He opened the cage door a little bit and let in a small dog.

The lioness crouched ready to spring upon the new intruder and finish him with one stroke of her great paw. But Mr. Doggie simply took no notice of her. He had seen a rat in the corner and he meant to have that rat supposing he were killed the next minute. So he went straight for it and soon made an end of it.

Mrs. Lioness sat down to think. This might be a friend after all, instead of another enemy. It was rather decent of him to kill that rat, and he might be useful in future. Better let him alone. Better let him see that she meant him no harm. Better make some advance to him to show that she appreciated his kindness.

So what do you think? Every night after that, before the lioness went to sleep she would give a little sort of call or growl, and Mr. Doggie would run up to her and lie down with his head on her breast. Then she would fold her great paws gently round him and they would go to sleep together.

And you will be glad to hear that she was never again tormented by rats. Mr. Doggie kept them all away.

3. The last story is a very short one and it really

isn't quite a story. A little boy was once asked how it was that David conquered Goliath. "Oh," he said, "because they were two to one!" His friends thought that was rather a queer reply, so they asked him what he meant. "Well, you see," he explained, "*God* was on David's side."

That was what the ten spies in the first story forgot—that God was on their side. Did I say *ten* spies? No, there were *twelve*, and the other two didn't forget. When the people were weeping and wailing about these terrible giants the two brave spies said, "The Lord is with us: fear them not."

Do you want to be heroes, boys and girls? There are just two ways.

You must face your difficulties. Running away from them won't help to solve them and it will stamp you as a coward. Be they big or little you must go straight ahead like the little dog in the Zoo. Then you will find one of two things—either that you have conquered them, or that they have vanished altogether.

And you must take God with you. That is the secret of true victory—the secret of how to be brave. David knew it when he fought against Goliath. Gideon knew it when he went forth against the hosts of Midian with his three hundred. The first disciples knew it when they set out to conquer the world for Christ. The "noble army of martyrs" knew it when they laid down their lives for the sake of righteousness. Many and many a one among our own brave soldiers has known it when he set out to face fearful odds in the defence of liberty and right.

And we can know it too. Whatever be our difficulties, whatever be our dangers, we need never fear if we can say, with Caleb and Joshua and all God's heroes, "The Lord is with us."

DUMB YET SPEAKING.

The ass saw the angel of the Lord.—Num. xxii. 25.

TO-DAY I want to speak to you about an animal that is often mentioned in the Bible. You know it very well. It is a great friend of yours—especially if you meet it at the seaside. Can you guess? A donkey, of course! What can be more fun than a donkey ride on the beach?

Now you will notice that the Bible always calls a "donkey" an "ass." Why? Because the word "donkey" was not invented in the days when what we call the Authorized Version of the Bible was written. That Version was written in 1611, and it was not till the middle of the eighteenth century—nearly a hundred and fifty years later—that the word "donkey" came into use. "Donkey" was at first a half-slang, half-pet term. You have heard of the word "dun," which means a dark dull-brown shade. Well, people added a double diminutive to "dun." They spoke of a "dun-ik-ie," meaning a little dull-brown creature, just as they still speak in Scotland of a "horseikie," or a "beastikie." But the nickname has become a greater favourite than the real name, and now we oftener say "donkey" than "ass."

The ass of the Bible was a very different beast from the poor, patient, weather-beaten little animal that we usually see yoked to a small cart and being beaten to make it go. We do not get the best donkeys in this country. The climate and the hardships they have to endure stunt them. We have to go to the East to see a donkey as it should be. There, especially in a wild state, it is fleet and strong and proud, and almost as large as a horse.

In countries where men have to travel much in the mountains they would be badly off without the donkey and its near relation the mule, which is a mixture of a donkey and a horse. These two animals are so sure-footed that they can climb like goats up the rocky mountain tracks. The merchant of the Bible used donkeys to carry his bales of goods; the farmer of the Bible used donkeys as well as oxen to plough his fields; the traveller of the Bible used donkeys for riding. Donkeys were as precious and as much thought of in Palestine as are our horses in this land to-day.

In those olden days too, the ass was counted a wise beast; it was credited with cleverness rather than stupidity. Nowadays when some stupid person is spoken of, we hear him called a donkey—a donkey and a person who is stupid have come to mean the same thing. But donkeys are still gifted with more wisdom than most people believe they possess. Many of you have heard how men are sometimes deceived by the mirage of the desert. Well, travellers tell us that the donkey never falls into that mistake.

When you boys and girls speak of clever animals, you generally think of dogs. I have heard a boy boast that his dog could speak. Haven't you all seen a terrier, when his master was leaving the house, look up with eyes that said, "May I go too?" When you thrash your dog, you know that he looks sad and reproachful. His eyes say, "Master, I know you must be right in being angry with me, but I did not really mean to do what was wrong." You know your dog can tell you what he feels.

Now Balaam's donkey saw what Balaam could not see, and it tried to tell Balaam what it felt. It did not know that Balaam was doing wrong and disobeying God, but it saw the Angel of the Lord with the drawn sword barring the way, and it would not go on. Twice it tried to turn aside, and twice Balaam thrashed it and forced it on. The third time it fell to the ground and Balaam thrashed it worse than ever. Then God allowed the donkey to speak—not with its eyes merely, but with a voice—and the wise creature said to its master, "Did you ever see me act like this before?" As much as to say, "Do you not understand that there is a reason for my not going on?" And then Balaam's eyes were opened too, and he saw the Angel standing in the way, and he bowed his head and fell on his face for shame.

Boys and girls, the dumb creatures often put us to shame too. They are often wiser than we are. God has gifted them with such marvellous instincts. They do not actually speak to us as Balaam's donkey spoke to him. But when we ill-treat them they look at us, and surely that look is enough. God has honoured these animals with His gifts. Shall we abuse what He honours and what He entrusts to our protection? For, as someone has said, "To the animals man is as a little god. He giveth them their meat in due season." And if God has honoured the animals has He not honoured the donkey above all animals. It was on a donkey that Christ, the Son of God Himself, rode into Jerusalem. You must not think that was to show He was humble. It was to show that He came as a prince of peace. Any ruler or prince engaged on a peaceful journey would have done the same.

A clever writer of the present day has written a book of short poems. There is one called "The Donkey." In it the poet makes the donkey speak and recall the New Testament story. Here are two verses of the little poem.

> The tattered outlaw of the earth,
> Of ancient crooked will;
> Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
> I keep my secret still.

Listen to this last verse—

> Fools! For I also had my hour;
> One far fierce hour and sweet:
> There was a shout about my ears,
> And palms before my feet.

Boys and girls, in this world there is no room for mockery, there is no room for cruelty. And surely even the "tattered outlaw," if Jesus has touched it, deserves a certain reverence from us. You love the seaside donkey; when you see its toiling brother of the street, remember the story of Balaam, and the still better one of Jesus riding upon an ass's colt.

The children of Jerusalem ran alongside crying, "Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" He loves to hear you sing your hymns now, and if He still cares for the sparrows—and we believe He does—surely He wants you to be kind to the donkeys, even when they are obstinate. Though it be, as the poet says, but a "tattered outlaw," that beautiful New Testament story belongs to its family history.

FOUND OUT.

Be sure your sin will find you out.—Num. xxxii. 23.

Boys and girls, the text this morning is one which most of you have heard at least once, and many of you have heard much oftener than once. And whether you have heard it once or often, I am pretty certain you particularly dislike it. I am not going to repeat it to you now, but you will find it in the last half of the twenty-third verse of the thirty-second chapter of Numbers.

I shall not repeat it, but all the same I am going to talk about it; for though it is perhaps not a favourite, it is one of the truest sayings in the world. Kings and queens know how true it is, and so do humble men and women.

Long ago the learned Greeks were so awed by this belief that they imagined that when a great crime was committed the birds and beasts, and even the earth and sea, became conscious of it, and banded themselves together to track the evildoer and force him to confess his sin.

That was a strange idea, but there was a spice of truth in it. For nothing in this world can be really hid. We safely bury our naughty deed like a little seed in a dark hole of the earth. We poke it well down and cover it up carefully, and go away trying to forget it and hoping we are done with it for ever. But we forget that every little seed has the power of growing into a plant, and one day we shall be faced by the plant that has sprung from that naughty buried deed. Perhaps when we see that plant we shall not recognize it as the fruit of our hidden sin, but it will be that and nothing else.

Shall I tell you what your crop will be if you bury a number of little lies, several mean deeds, and many evil thoughts? You may never notice it yourself, especially in its first stages, but your friends will remark it. The fruits of these little lies and these mean deeds and these evil thoughts will appear—where? On your own face. They will look out of your face for all the world to see. And the world will say, "I can't trust that fellow: he doesn't look straight!" or "Beware of that girl! She has meanness written all over her." Your sins will have found *you* out.

Now there is one hopeful thing about all this. It is that when we have done wrong, when we have buried our sin and tried to forget it, we *can't* forget it. Buried though it is, it keeps reminding us it is there; and if we have any conscience at all, we are thoroughly miserable and unhappy. That is our one hope. Shall I explain why by telling you a story?

A man who was in a position of trust took a considerable sum of money which was not his own. He began without having the slightest intention of stealing. He just took a little to tide him over a difficulty, intending to replace it. Finding himself unable to do this, he took a little more to cover the first default, and so went on until he was driven to live a life of fraud and deception. But he never knew a moment's peace: he lived a haunted life. At last the time came when he was discovered. He confessed before the magistrates, and was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. But, strange to say, with his confession the terror lifted. He felt he could pray, he came to himself and to his Heavenly Father. Being found out was his salvation. The very law which broke his heart raised him up to seek God.

And that is the way to do with your sins—to confess them, to dig them up if they are buried; better still, never to bury them, but to take them straight to God and ask Him to help you to do what is right in the way of undoing them. He will not fail you. He will give you the necessary courage. And He will take the sins you have brought to Him and will destroy for ever their power to harm you, to find you out.

AUGUST HOLIDAYS.

And they journeyed from Marah, and came unto Elim: and in Elim were twelve springs of water, and threescore and ten palm trees; and they pitched there.—Num. xxxiii. 9.

THE children of Israel would, I feel sure, be very thankful when they reached Elim. They had had a long weary journey—mostly wilderness. They were tired; at times they had been discontented. Their leaders must indeed have had a trying time. Did you ever think what the long marches in the wilderness must have meant for the boys and girls? Did you ever picture their joy when they arrived at this place of fountains and palm trees?

You know how you enjoy a beautiful day of sunshine after a spell of bad weather. Those children, we may be sure, forgot about the long dry road. I believe they danced for sheer joy and chased each other about as the tents were being pitched at Elim. On the march their fathers and mothers were querulous. "Don't do this!" "Don't do that!" they kept saying. It was not good to be going to the Land of Canaan, the children thought. Now, a delightful break—a holiday—had come. Their mothers spoke to them once more as they had done in the old days, when they first set out from Egypt. They told them again of the Land of Promise, and the God of Israel.

I am going to read to you two verses from a children's book. One can almost imagine them to be the words of an old Hebrew, who had been a little boy at Elim.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,
And sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap, and kissèd me
And pointing to the East, began to say:

Look on the rising sun: there God does live,
And gives His light, and gives His heat away,
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday.

Think of Elim with its palm trees. The palm is one of the most beautiful trees of the East. It was the badge of Judæa, just as that of England is the rose, that of Ireland the shamrock, that of Scotland the thistle, that of France the lily. The palm, as I have said, was the emblem of Judæa; and when the Romans conquered the Jews, they struck a medal in memory of their victory; and that medal had the figure of a woman weeping beneath a palm tree.

You must have seen a palm tree in a hot-house. You will have noticed that it grows straight, and tall, and its feathery leaves spring out of the top of the trunk. They form a shape like a huge umbrella. Where there were so many palm trees and fountains we may be sure there was luxurious green undergrowth. In this holiday month, does not Elim suggest a place for a picnic?

Robert Louis Stevenson has a delightful holiday paper which I hope you will one day read. We know that he himself must at some time have had dreamy holidays in a place where there were trees and green grass. Listen to this little poem from his *Child's Garden of Verses.*

> When children are playing alone on the green,
> In comes the playmate that never was seen.
> When children are happy and lonely and good,
> The Friend of the Children comes out of the wood.
>
> Nobody heard him and nobody saw,
> His is a picture you never could draw,
> But he's sure to be present, abroad or at home,
> When children are happy and playing alone.

I spoke of picnics. Don't we all love them? A girl was at a picnic one wonderful day in August. It was held at a lovely spot, where there was a lake, soft green grass, trees, and an old castle. There was a happy and hungry party—so hungry that they could scarcely wait for dinner. When at length a gentleman stood up to say grace, the girl hoped he would not say a long one. Well, he did say a pretty long one, but somehow she could not help listening to it. His words made her feel that "the friend of the children" had indeed come out from the woods, and was at the table.

But holidays pass. The Hebrew boys and girls had to take the road again. Then, day after day, it was tramp, tramp, tramp, until, after a while their little feet were as tired as ever. Your holidays will soon be at an end. But you will go back to school with stronger muscles; you will be clearer headed; you will have better memories. We get holidays just that we may be the better able to "peg on," over the road of life. Sometimes it is rough and the skies are grey. But the children of Israel were bound for the Land of Canaan.

Long ago children in the Sunday school used to sing about the Land of Canaan. They thought of Heaven when they sang: they were meant to. But God has sent us into this world to live. Often enough that means tramping over hard, rough roads, and under grey skies, but there are rests by the way. You are meanwhile having one. Are you getting ready for the march again? The "Land of Canaan" is in front, and through God's help you will reach it.

WHAT'S IN A KNOT?

Lest thou forget.—Deut. iv. 9.

I WONDER how many of you tie knots on your handkerchiefs to remind yourselves of something you particularly want to remember. It is quite a good plan so long as you don't forget what the knot represents! Did it ever strike you why people tie knots on their handkerchiefs? What made them think of adopting that special way of reminding themselves, and when did they begin to do it?

The idea is more than five thousand years old, and it came to us from China. About three thousand years before the birth of Christ, the Emperor Tschang Ki of China invented the art of writing. Before that date all the great events in the kingdom were commemorated by knots on cords, and the ancient history of China is preserved for us in this way. Of course when writing was introduced the Chinese gave up that way of recording memorable happenings, but the custom has come down to us in the knots we make on handkerchiefs to represent the things we wish to remember.

Now I think some of us would require a great many more knots on our handkerchiefs than we put there.

In fact we would need so many knots that we should have to keep a handkerchief sachet on our persons with a knot in each corner of every handkerchief. Why should we need that? Just because we forget so many things we ought to remember.

1. Some of us have a curious habit of leaving our belongings lying about for somebody else to pick up and put away. The result is that when we want them again, they very often can't be found, and the whole house is turned upside down and the whole household, including ourselves, made thoroughly uncomfortable. Of course it doesn't matter for ourselves, because we deserve to suffer a little inconvenience, but it is rather hard on the other people.

There is a remarkable fact which perhaps you have noticed—we don't forget the things we want to remember. If your father told you he was going to take you to *Peter Pan* or a cricket match to-morrow, or if a friend sent you an invitation to a particularly jolly party next week, would you forget? I fancy you would be thinking and talking about it most of the time till then. And why should you forget those other matters?

2. But there are many things we forget besides the things we leave lying about, and among them are the kindnesses we receive from others.

There was a boy once whose father died when he was a baby, and whose mother worked very hard to feed him and clothe him and send him to a good school so that he might have a chance in life. He was a good boy, and he worked hard and became a successful young man. But his mother had ruined her health by hard work and starvation and she grew very ill. When she lay dying her son came to see her and he was so sorry to see her in such pain and weakness that he put his arms round her and said, "Oh, mother, what a good mother you have been to me!" And his mother looked into his face and said, "Do you know, my boy, it is the first time you have ever told me that?"

We are much too ready to take for granted all that our fathers and mothers do for us, and I think it would do us good sometimes just to sit down and count one by one the things they do even in one day.

3. And then all of us are far too ready to forget the kindnesses we receive from God. If we tried to count *them*, we should have to go on till the very end of our lives and after. King David once tried to make a list of them in one of his Psalms, and here it is: (1) "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities"; (2) "Who healeth all thy diseases"; (3) "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction"; (4) "Who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies"; (5) "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things." And if you look well at these headings I think you will see that each of them contains a great many things. We are all very ready to grumble if things go wrong, but we forget the benefits we receive daily.

There was once a good king in Spain called

Alfonso XII. Now it came to the ears of this king that the pages at his court forgot to ask God's blessing on their daily meals, and he determined to rebuke them. He invited them to a banquet which they all attended. The table was spread with every kind of good thing, and the boys ate with evident relish; but not one of them remembered to ask God's blessing on the food.

During the feast a beggar entered, dirty and ill-clad. He seated himself at the royal table and ate and drank to his heart's content. At first the pages were amazed, and they expected that the king would order him away. But Alfonso said never a word.

When the beggar had finished he rose and left without a word of thanks. Then the boys could keep silence no longer. "What a despicably mean fellow!" they cried. But the king silenced them, and in clear, calm tones he said, "Boys, bolder and more audacious than this beggar have you all been. Every day you sit down to a table supplied by the bounty of your Heavenly Father, yet you ask not His blessing nor express to Him your gratitude."

I'm afraid we are all rather like these pages. Not only for food, but for raiment, and home, and life, and friends, and joy, and all His other benefits we often forget to thank our Heavenly Father.

4. And some people go even further. They forget God altogether. They are so busy with other matters that they scarcely ever give Him a thought. And that is the most foolish thing of all, because we can never

be really happy away from Him. God has given us everything we possess. Best of all He has given us His own Son. And the very least we can do is to remember Him always, and give ourselves back to Him to love and serve Him.

LITTLE BY LITTLE.

And the Lord thy God will cast out those nations before thee by little and little.—Deut. vii. 22.

I AM going to ask you a question and I'll give you three guesses as to the answer. Here is the question. Are you all listening carefully? What is the most difficult lesson for a boy or girl to learn? Somebody says "grammar." Yes, that is a difficult lesson, but it is not the right answer. Somebody else says "mathematics." No, there is something harder still. One of the big boys guesses, "Greek." That is pretty stiff, but there is something stiffer. Do you give it up? Well, the hardest lesson for a boy or girl to learn is just—patience.

I don't mean the kind of patience that you play with packs of cards. I know some boys who can beat their mother completely at that. No, I just mean the ordinary everyday kind of patience — the kind of patience you have to use when you go to the railway station and find the train is an hour late; the kind of patience you have to use when you are given a long, long, *long* task and you don't see the end of it, or even the middle of it; the kind of patience you have to use when somebody particularly slow is doing something for you that you want done very quickly; the kind of patience you have to use when you sow seeds in your garden and you want to see the flowers bloom immediately; the kind of patience you have to use when you are asked to a particularly jolly party and there's a whole week to wait before it comes off.

Do you know why boys and girls find this lesson of patience so very difficult to learn? It is just because they are so full of energy and eagerness. Now we don't want to rob you of any of your energy or eagerness. They keep the world young and beautiful and sweet. But we want you to add a little—just a little—patience. Why? Because often and often we spoil things by being impatient.

Now I think the children of Israel must have felt rather like you when God told them that He would drive out the inhabitants of Canaan, not in one year, but "by little and little." They had been at the trouble to come all that distance and they weren't to get the Promised Land to themselves after all! Nevertheless it was better for them that they should wait. As yet they were too small a nation to take care of the whole country. If they got it all to themselves at once, some of the land would run to waste, and the wild beasts would multiply to such an extent as to become a great danger to everybody.

So you see the best way is often the slow way, the best way is often "by little and little."

I want to give you three thoughts to take with you.

1. *Beautiful things are formed little by little.*—I could tell you story upon story to prove this, but I want to give you just two.

In the city of Florence stands the famous church of San Giovanni, where for hundreds of years the children of Florence have been baptized. Now at the entrance to this church are two pairs of gates—the most beautiful gates in the world. They are modelled in bronze, and they are so lovely that Michael Angelo, the great sculptor, said they were fit to be the gates of heaven.

These gates were made by a man called Ghiberti; and how long do you think he took to complete them?—Forty-seven years! Forty-seven years—almost a lifetime! And yet, do you not think it was worth spending a lifetime to make the most beautiful gates in the world?

The other story is about a little 'prentice boy. He, too, lived in Italy, and he served a great artist who was a worker in mosaics. You know what mosaics are, don't you? They are the pictures that are made out of tiny bits of stone and glass.

Well, this boy ran errands for the artist and kept the place tidy. He noticed that his master often threw away little bits of stone and glass that he thought useless, and one day he plucked up courage and asked the artist if he might keep these scraps for himself. The artist replied, "Certainly, certainly; they are of no use to me."

So from that day the boy began picking up the fragments his master had rejected. Some he threw away again, others he kept, and from these morsels he began to make a picture.

It took him a long time, for he had only his spare moments and many of the scraps were useless.

Years passed and the boy still remained with the artist. Then one day his master made a discovery. He went into a room that was seldom entered, and there, behind some rubbish, he found the most wonderful bit of mosaic work. He called the youth and asked him how it came to be there. "For," said he, "it is the work of a master hand." And the boy confessed that he himself had made the picture, little by little, out of the tiny pieces of stone and glass the artist had thrown away.

So you see if you want to make something really beautiful you must take time and pains. You can't make a beautiful thing just anyhow. Even God takes weeks and months to make the flowers out of the seeds.

2. And the second thing I want you to remember is that *useful things are accomplished little by little.*—Have you ever watched the little birds making their nests? They carry one straw at a time, and you wonder how they can have the patience to work so slowly. But in their minds is a picture of the comfortable home they are going to have, and of the dear little downy birds that will grow up there; and they know that if they

just keep on carrying straws they will get to the end some time.

Some years ago, after a heavy snowstorm, a little boy began to make a pathway through a deep snowbank which lay in front of his grandmother's cottage. And what do you think he used to shovel the snow? One of these small iron spades that you take to the seaside.

A gentleman who was passing stopped to look at him, and asked, "How are you going to get through with that little spade?" "Just by keeping on shovelling," was the answer.

So, boys and girls, if you get a long weary task to do, remember that there *is* an end to it, and that that end can be reached just by "keeping on shovelling."

3. Once more, remember that *the most lasting things are made perfect* little by little.—A fir-tree and a poplar grow up quickly, but they are short lived. An oak takes a very long time to grow, but it lives for anything from 800 to 1500 years. You can run up a house in a few months. It takes generations to build a cathedral. But the cathedral will be there hundreds of years after the house has tumbled to ruins.

Over the river Taff in Wales is a bridge which has stood for over a century and a half. Because of its beautiful shape it has been called the Rainbow Arch. Have you ever heard the story of how that bridge was built?

In the year 1746 a young engineer—William

Edwards—erected a bridge over the Taff. It consisted of several arches and it looked very fine when it was completed. But, alas! the rain descended and the floods came; and the swollen river, carrying all sorts of debris, dashed against the bridge and utterly destroyed it.

Now Edwards had promised to keep the bridge in order for seven years, so there was nothing for it but to set to work and erect another one. This time he built one arch which stretched from side to side of the river. It was scarcely completed when it cracked in the middle and collapsed.

Once more the brave engineer tried. He built one long high arch and he left three holes in it which, he said, would help the bridge to resist wind and water. And there the arch still stands—a monument to a brave man's perseverance and courage. It has withstood the storms of over a hundred and fifty years.

Boys and girls, do you know what is the most lasting thing we possess? It is our soul. That is going to last for ever and ever, and it is only little by little that it can be perfected. And we are made perfect largely by our failures, *if* we keep on trying.

When you are worsted in the battle with temptation, when you are downhearted or discouraged, resolve that you will do better the next time. You have learned by experience and you are not so likely to make the same mistake again. Don't lose heart. Remember the brave engineer of the Taff. Remember that God is able to make something really splendid of you if you keep on trying.

Looking upward every day,
  Sunshine on our faces;
Pressing onward every day
  Toward the heavenly places.

Growing every day in awe,
  For Thy Name is holy;
Learning every day to love,
  With a love more lowly.

Walking every day more close
  To our Elder Brother;
Growing every day more true
  Unto one another.

Every day more gratefully
  Kindnesses receiving,
Every day more readily
  Injuries forgiving.

Leaving every day behind
  Something which might hinder;
Running swifter every day,
  Growing purer, kinder.

Lord, so pray we every day,
  Hear us in Thy pity,
That we enter in at last
  To the Holy City.[1]

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[1] Mary Butler.

IN THE HEART AND ON THE HAND.

Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul; and ye shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes.—Deut. xi. 18.

Four times these words, or words very like them, are found in the commandments which Moses laid down for the children of Israel. Once he said that a feast which they were to keep—the Feast of Unleavened Bread—was to be a sign on their hands and their foreheads. He meant once the custom of giving all the first-born animals or children to God, and twice he was speaking of the commandments themselves.

Now, how could any of these things be upon the hands or the foreheads of the people of Israel? If you were to go to India to-day, you would find people wearing on their foreheads a red mark. It is a sign that they worship a certain god. Or if you went to Africa you would find the Kaffir smearing himself with red ochre. That also is his way of showing his religion. When he becomes a Christian he washes that off. In other countries you find that the marks are made by tattooing, or pricking in a pattern with some colour.

Such customs are very, very old, and were in use among the heathen peoples round Israel, to show to which god they belonged. Sometimes they were copied by the Israelites themselves, when they fell away from worshipping the true God. But Moses wished to teach them that keeping the commandments which he gave them was to be *their* way of showing their God, as much as though they wore marks cut on their hands and faces.

A very long time after the death of Moses—hundreds of years after indeed—there was a certain class among the Jews who were very strict in keeping all the rules of their religion. They were called Pharisees. They gave nearly all their time to studying the Law of Moses, and to writing explanations of it. They were so anxious to keep every word of it that they sometimes missed the meaning of it, and tried to carry it out in a way that was never intended. They laid down so many rules about the way that the Law should be kept that common people felt it was no use to try to keep them—they were too ignorant to understand them, and too busy with their work to have time for them.

The Pharisees, then, said that when Moses spoke these words he meant exactly what he said, and intended the people of Israel to bind these very words on their hands, and on their foreheads. They must surely have overlooked that he said, "Ye shall lay up these my words *in your heart and in your soul.*" So they made small leather boxes, one for the head and one for the hand, to hold the words of Moses, and every good Pharisee wore them. They wore them all day, and every day, except on Sabbaths and feast days.

These little cases, which are called phylacteries, are still used by the Jews, but now they put them on only while they are saying their prayers. Would you like to know what the phylactery for the head is like? It is a little square box of leather, divided inside into four divisions, or "houses." In each "house" there is a slip of parchment with a text written on it in Hebrew. The texts are those which speak of binding the words of Moses on the hand and on the forehead. The leather box is sewed on to a square piece of leather, and fastened on the forehead by straps which go round the head.

The phylactery for the hand is like this but has only one "house" inside, and the same four texts are all written on one piece of parchment. It is fastened to the bare left arm, just above the elbow, so that it may rest against the heart. It is kept in position with straps like the other one.

But to fix some words of the law to the outside of your head is very different from laying up the meaning of it "in your heart and in your soul."

Phylacteries are once mentioned in the New Testament. Christ was speaking to His disciples about the Pharisees. And He warned them not to be like them, for He said, "Their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi." And He went on to say that their religion was all outside show and hypocrisy.

The phylactery was *outside* not *inside*—that was what was wrong with it. And when you come to think of it, there is that difference in religion all the world over, the difference between keeping the rules of it "to be seen of men," and loving it with the heart and keeping its laws from love.

Some years ago an old Chinaman died in China. And all the people in the town in which he had lived mourned him deeply. Do you know why? "Because," said they, "there was no difference between him and the Book." They meant that he was a sort of real live Bible. He carried the Bible's sayings so much in his heart that he was always acting them in his life. They were not a thing apart. They were a bit of himself.

Boys and girls, an outside religion is no use. A religion that you put on for occasions like a Sunday coat or hat is not religion. It is a dressed-up, play-acted pretence of religion. The religion we all want is the religion of the good old Chinaman—the religion that is in our hearts and on our hands, and is so much part of ourselves that it enters into everything we say and do.

CITIES OF REFUGE.

He shall flee unto one of these cities and live.—Deut. xix. 5.

Try to imagine yourselves back in the days of the Norman kings, when England was a very different country from what it is now. There were no railways, of course, and few roads, and the country was still covered in many places with woods and forests where now you see manufacturing towns. There were no coal-pits then, with their hills of refuse and their wheels; and the counties of Northumberland and Durham were a pleasant district of broad moors and wooded hills and clear rivers. But on a bend of the river Wear, there stood, as it stands to-day, the Cathedral of Durham, where the bones of the old St. Cuthbert had found their resting-place.

On a hot summer day you might have seen a man running breathlessly along the footpath over the hills. He ran with his head down. He was panting with heat, and limping with weariness, and he often turned to look over his shoulder to see if he were followed. Sometimes the path led through the woods, but he dared not rest to enjoy the shade. Sometimes it led over a brook, but he scarcely stopped to drink. Again he was on the highway, and as he ran he saw by the wayside a block of stone, having on it one word cut in rude letters—*Sanctuarium.* Then he knew he was on the right road. One or two such blocks of stone may still be seen in England. They show the way to a *sanctuary.* With haggard face and bloodshot eyes, his clothes torn and covered with dust, he still pressed on till he saw before him the cathedral, the church of St. Cuthbert. That was where he was going, but his strength was almost gone, and he knew that not far behind him were pursuers seeking his life. Gathering up all his strength, he made a desperate effort, and reached the church. He seized the knocker, thundered with it on the door, and a moment later was safe inside.

What did it all mean ? This was a man who had by accident, or in a sudden quarrel, killed another. In those days they had not our slow and careful methods of justice. The friends of the dead man were hot on his track to take vengeance on him, but if he could reach the church and "take sanctuary," as it was called, he was safe till his case could be tried by law. This ensured that the man should have a fair trial, and that if he were to be punished he should be punished justly.

Every church was a sanctuary, but some had more privileges than others. There were two kinds of sanctuary, one general and one special. There were many of these special sanctuaries in England. Some of them, such as Durham Cathedral, still have on the door the knocker which had to be used to gain admittance to the protection of the sanctuary.

The person taken into the sanctuary had to do three things. He had to confess his crime, to lay down his arms, and to promise to keep the rules of the house. If he had gone to a common sanctuary, he might pay compensation, or he might, within forty days, dress himself in sackcloth and go before the court, and take an oath that he would leave the realm and not come back without the king's leave. Then with bare head, and clothed in a long white robe, he set out for the coast as quickly as possible, and unless he reached it in the time given, his life was forfeited. But if he had reached a special sanctuary, the man might stay there in safety for his whole life.

Customs of this kind are common to many countries. This is what Moses intended when he set apart six cities for cities of refuge, that the slayer who killed his neighbour ignorantly, without hating him, might flee there and live.

Boys and girls, we too need a sanctuary or city of refuge. We are always falling into sin. We sin in ignorance, and we sin intentionally, and we are afraid of the punishment of our sins. The thought of it follows us like the avenger of blood following the man. Where shall we find a sanctuary? This is what the Psalmist says: "Trust in him at all times . . . God is a refuge for us." What the Church was in times past to the hunted man it is to us still, and the Cross of Christ, which tells of His love, points the way to the sanctuary.

But there is something for us to do if we wish to come into the refuge. We must confess our sins, we must lay down our arms in submission to Him, and we must promise obedience. If we do that we may stay in this sanctuary, safe for ever.

BIRD-NESTING.

If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, but the young thou mayest take to thyself; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.—Deut. xxii. 6, 7.

You think of the children of Israel, don't you, as having lived far back in the dim ages? But here is one of the commandments which God gave to them—a little one about a bird's nest—and the words of it make us feel that those wanderers were just big boys and girls with the same inclinations as we ourselves have to-day.

We learn from the words that the birds that flew about the Israelites as they journeyed were, in many cases, birds such as those we have now. The people must have been robbing their nests too, else we should not have had this verse at all. Naturally enough, in their wanderings they often came upon a nest by the wayside.

It may be that the Israelitish boys knew the little lapwings' nests which are found in a hollow by the side of a marsh. Perhaps they thoughtlessly scattered the eggs, or perhaps Mr. Lapwing—artful little bird that he is!—lured them away from it with the wonderful antics with which he and his ancestors, generation after generation, have protected their nests. For Mr. Lapwing is the real defender of his nest. The mother bird is generally so frightened that she flies away. But when an enemy approaches the male lapwing practises the tricks his father taught him. Gradually moving farther and farther away from where the precious eggs are, he turns a number of somersaults, or he does other equally extraordinary things. The onlooker becomes so interested that the nest is forgotten, and the lapwing's end is gained. It may be, too, that this same experience of having to defend themselves for centuries is the explanation of their pathetic cry.

You remember Noah's clever scout bird, the dove? She, too, would be known to the Israelites. The dove has a very mournful note. No wonder! Her family has ancient legends of how large numbers of them used to be trapped and taken captive to Jerusalem and then killed. Sacrifice had no meaning to them. It was all a mystery, and they just mourned.

What made me think of the text this morning? Why, just the fact that it is May! And May is the great month for birds' nests. It is the birds' busy time.

In trees, in bushes, on house-tops, or on the ground, they have built their little homes. What wonderful architects many of them are. One bird has woven twigs together into a building like an old Gothic church; another has built his house in the shape of a bottle; while one we all love lives in a dear little house made of mud. They were very patient while they gathered their building materials; and when they selected a site for their nest, by some strange instinct they chose it as far out of the reach of boys and girls as possible. But in spite of all their wonderful wisdom, somehow—and I feel ashamed to say it—there are always boys ready to climb up and destroy the little houses on which so much thoughtful care has been bestowed.

Now I am to give you three reasons why I want you *not* to go nesting in May.

1. *Because it is cruel and cowardly.*—What would you think if anyone were to break open the door of your home and run away with your bed? Think of your mother going out one day and coming home to find that someone had been there and stolen you away! Yet, how often does the poor mother bird come home to find all her children taken from her? There may be an unwritten law in your school—I hope there is—which says, "If you want a specimen egg from the nest of any bird, take one and go your way; leave the rest of the eggs with the mother bird; and in no wise interfere with the young ones." If you rob a nest, it is a case of the strong taking advantage of the weak—a cowardly action under any circumstances—you know it is.

2. *Because the birds have rights.*—Any creature that suffers has rights. Theodore Parker, the great American preacher, when a lad, saw a turtle on a log,

and, with stone in hand, he crept up and was about to throw it, when he heard a voice within which made him desist. He asked his mother about it. She told him that it was the protest of the doctrine of rights—the voice of God.

3. *Because we ought to love the birds*, and love never wilfully hurts what it loves. Love was Christ's great commandment—love in little as well as in big things. God is great, yet He cares for the birds. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father."

What has the song of birds not done for many a man and woman? It has cheered them, it has inspired them, it has given them new courage. It has even led them to God.

Here are some beautiful verses, by the poet George Macdonald, which tell what the song of a bird did for the heart of a man.

A brown bird sang on a blossomy tree,
Sang in the moonshine, merrily,
Three little songs, one, two, and three,
A song for his wife, for himself, and me.

He sang for his wife, sang low, sang high,
Filling the moonlight that filled the sky;
"Thee, thee, I love thee, heart alive!
Thee, thee, thee, and thy round eggs five!"

He sang to himself, "What shall I do
With this life that thrills me through and through!
Glad is so glad that it turns to ache!
Out with it, song, or my heart will break!"

He sang to me, "Man, do not fear
Though the moon goes down and the dark is near;
Listen my song and rest thine eyes;
Let the moon go down that the sun may rise!"

I folded me up in the heart of his tune,
And fell asleep with the sinking moon;
I woke with the day's first golden gleam,
And, lo, I had dreamed a precious dream!

BATTLEMENTS.

When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof.—Deut. xxii. 8.

I SUPPOSE not more than two or three of you have actually seen an Eastern house. But all of you have seen pictures of houses in India, Egypt, and Palestine. And not one of you but has admired their flat roofs. "What a grand idea!" you have said to yourselves. "I wish our houses had flat roofs too. Wouldn't it be jolly to go up there and look down on the street?"

Now, when you were gazing at the pictures did your sharp eyes notice also that some, but not all, of these flat roofs had a wall round the edge? That wall round the edge is the battlement of to-day's text. And to-day's text is just one of the lesser laws which the Hebrews made long years ago.

And a very good common-sense law it was! For the roof of an Eastern house is perhaps more used than any other part of it. It is the playground and the promenade, the garden, the drying loft, and—in the hot weather—the sleeping-place of the people who live in the house. It is also *the* spot from which a view may be had, for Oriental houses have generally no windows giving on to the street, and if they have windows, these are so closely latticed that they are of little use.

If an Eastern roof is used for so many purposes you can understand how necessary this law was. You yourself would not care to sleep where there was a chance of rolling off your mattress in the middle of the night and next minute finding yourself in the street. It is bad enough when you fall from your bed on to the floor. Or imagine playing games on a roof without a battlement! You would have no freedom at all. You would constantly have to be watching that you did not step back into the air. The battlement is, at one and the same time, what restrains you and what gives you freedom.

The Hebrews made this law for the owners of houses. The owner of a house was held responsible if anyone chanced to fall off the roof and get injured or killed. The pity was that every one did not obey it. Some people preferred their own way. And it is the same still.

There is a famous book about Palestine which I hope you may all read some day. It is called *The Land and the Book.* If it had not been for a battlement that book might never have been written. The writer, Dr. Thomson, on the third day of his tour through the Holy Land was so absorbed in gazing at the wonderful view to be had from the roof of a house in Beirût that he nearly walked off it, and if it had not been for the parapet which caught him he would have plunged to the street below. He tells us in that book that the Moslems to-day build high parapets round their houses. But the Christians are, alas! not so particular. And he adds that many an accident would be prevented if everybody observed the law of battlements.

And there would be far less sorrow and trouble in life if people obeyed the law of battlements there. The law of house battlements was a kind law. It had love behind it. The law of life's battlements is as kind a law and it has just as much love behind it. As the owner of the house was responsible for the life of whoever went on the roof, so your father and mother feel responsible for you. And so they build battlements. They build them even for the youngest of you.

The first battlements they build are battlements you can actually see. When you are a toddling baby, they pop you into a play-pen. Inside it you can be safely left to amuse yourself. If you had not that fence round you, you would be exploring everything and everywhere, and getting hurt every other minute. Or they put a fire-guard in front of the grate. You think it is a nuisance, especially when you are dying to light papers at the blaze; but that fire-guard is your battlement of safety. It keeps you from setting fire to yourself and being badly burnt.

As you grow older you will find that life's battlements are not—like baby's battlements—things you can see. They are rather rules that you must keep, laws which you must obey. For instance, you are forbidden to be out later than a certain hour at night, you are not allowed to smoke cigarettes, or to read certain books, and you are debarred from making friends with certain companions. You think all these rules irksome and needless. But every "don't" is a battlement of safety, and some day you will understand that your father and mother knew better than you, and that the rules they made for you were wise and good.

By and by, when you reach what older people are fond of calling "years of discretion," you will find that you have to build many of your own battlements. You will find that Parliament has made laws which, as a good citizen, you must keep or suffer the penalty, But within these laws you will find there are many things you *may* do that it were better you should not do. If you are wise you will say to yourself, I *may* but I *shan't*, and you will build your battlements cheerfully and manfully.

And having built your battlements, keep behind them! Don't jump over them from a false idea that you will have more freedom on the other side. You will only land yourself in terrible danger. And don't knock them down weakly at the suggestion of a friend who has perhaps knocked down his and wants company in his dangerous doings. Have the courage to defend your walls when you once have built them.

Otherwise you will be like the valuable little dog whom a man saw fastened to a railing. He went up to it and undid the chain and marched it off. And that doggie never so much as tried to bark, or struggle, or bite the thief. It meekly allowed itself to be led away.

Are you going to be like that stupid dog, "led away" by evil companions? Or are you going to stick to the rules you have made? Are you going to keep behind your battlements?

But with all this battlement-building don't forget the best parapet of all, the parapet which makes all other parapets secure, and without which every other parapet is liable to fall or crumble away. That parapet is the love of Christ. Take Him as your Friend. Then all life's battlements will be blessings not hindrances.

JUST WEIGHTS.

Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small.—Deut. xxv. 13.

THE work of exploring the ancient cities of Palestine or Babylon is most interesting. There may be nothing to show where the city stood but a large mound or mounds. The houses have fallen and crumbled to dust. The walls have fallen also. Only the large stones of the foundations are left in their place, buried in the dust and sand.

But when the explorer comes with his spade and tools, and carefully opens up this mound, what wonderful things he finds. He can trace the city of thousands of years ago, and tell you where the walls stood, and where the streets, what kind of houses the people had, what race they belonged to, and how they lived. He finds in the houses of these people, so long dead, broken dishes, and he will tell you how they were made, and where. He finds tools of stone, or bronze, or iron, and he can tell from these the time at which the city flourished. He may dig deeper still, and find tools or weapons of stone which show that still farther back an older race lived on the same spot, and died away and was succeeded by the people whose remains were found above theirs. There are traces of their altars and high places, and he will tell you what their religion was, and who were their gods. You may imagine yourself going through the street of the living town, and seeing the workmen at work. Here was the potter's workshop, where he made his clay pots and bowls. Here was the carpenter, and here the worker in stone, and here the goldsmith.

Now those who have excavated can tell you a curious thing about this goldsmith. He was found to have had two drawers full of little stone weights. When these were examined, one lot was found to be too light, the other lot was too heavy. Why? Because the heavy weights were used in buying that he might get more than he ought to get, and the light weights were used in selling, that he might give less than he should give. I wonder if people suspected him of such tricks, but could not prove it? One might think that as his false weights have lain hidden for thousands of years, his sin would never be found out, yet there it is. This kind of dishonesty is very old. It was in use when the Book of Deuteronomy was written. So it was necessary to put this law into it: "Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small."

In these days we have inspectors of weights and measures, whose business it is to see that weights are all exactly the same as a fixed standard, so that when we ask for a pound of tea or sugar, we can be sure that we shall always get the same quantity.

But it is not only the grocer who weighs things.

We are all weighing and measuring things in one way or another. And not only things but people. When we read some story of cruelty and wrong, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and indignation rises in our hearts, we are weighing the people who did those things and finding them bad weight. This is how we weigh everybody we have to do with.

1. Now, since we cannot help weighing and judging people, it is of the greatest importance that *our weights should be right.*—The grocer's weights are kept right by a certain standard fixed by the Government. Who can fix the standard of what is right and wrong? Only God. And no one but God can judge anybody quite justly, for He alone knows all their motives and reasons, and how sometimes when they meant good it seemed to turn out evil. When we weigh actions and people and judge whether they are right or wrong, we must try our weights by God's standard, that is, we must consider how God sees them, and we must be very careful, since we cannot see into the heart, lest we should call good what God calls bad, or bad what He calls good. We must have a perfect and just weight, or as near it as we can get.

2. The second thing to remember is that *we must not have two sets of weights.*—What is wrong is wrong whether in ourselves or in others. It is so very easy to see excuses for ourselves. Our faults never seem quite so bad as those of other people. We "did not mean it," or it was "only this" or "only that." We are apt

to weigh other people's sins with one weight and our own with another. But that will not do. Nor will it do to weigh ourselves with them, and say, "Well, I am not so bad as that girl anyhow." Nor must we have one set of weights for the people we like and another for the people we dislike. Goodness is goodness, and we must admit it wherever we see it, even in those we don't like. If we shut our eyes to that, do you know what we are doing? We are spoiling our standard weight.

Here, then, are two things to remember—a perfect weight, and a standard weight, for yourself as well as everybody else.

Said the boy as he read, "I too will be bold,
  I will fight for the truth and its glory!"
He went to the playground, and soon had told
  A very cowardly story!

Said the girl as she read, "That was grand, I declare!
  What a true, what a lovely, sweet soul!"
In half an hour she went up the stair,
  Looking as black as a coal!

"The mean little wretch, I wish I could fling
  This book at his head!" said another;
Then he went and did the same ugly thing
  To his own little trusting brother!

Alas for him who sees a thing grand
  And does not fit himself to it!
But the meanest act, on sea or on land,
  Is to find a fault, and then do it!

THE WORD IN THE HEART.

The word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.—Deut. xxx. 14.

THERE was once a little boy called Willie, of whom George Macdonald tells us, who stood by a gate watching the sunset. The sun went down in great clouds of red and gold, and then the colours faded away and the silver moon came into the sky. The little boy, as he looked at them, felt a longing in his heart to do something great and glorious, to be a very famous man.

He came in and asked his sister Kate, "Do you think it is wrong to wish to be great?" But she said she did not know. So he went to bed and dreamed of it while the wind was singing round the cottage, and in the morning the first thought that came into his mind was, "I must begin at once if I want to be great. I must not waste a day."

But he did not quite know how to begin, so he went to his father and said, "Father, I want to be a great man. Is it wrong?" His father said it was not wrong at all, and he would be very sorry if his boy did *not* wish to be great.

Then Willie exclaimed, "Oh, I'm so glad! I'll set about being great at once. I'll begin this very night and stick in to my lessons, so as to get ready to be famous. Of course what I'd *really* like best is to be a king. But I suppose that's impossible. So I think I'll be a field-marshal. It would be grand to gallop about on a fiery steed and wave a shining sword, and have the cavalry and the artillery and the infantry all obeying my word of command. Or I might be an admiral of the Fleet! Then I should sail the seas and sweep the enemy from them with the roar and flash of my guns."

"Ah!" said his father, "is that your idea of greatness? Why, a puppet dressed up in uniform could wave his sword and flash his guns!"

"But, father," protested Willie, "it isn't the sword and the guns I really want. It's the glory, you know—the being great and high above everybody else—that I'm keen on."

But Willie's father shook his head. "If you think being high up in the world is being great, my boy, I'm afraid you're on the wrong tack. Do you see that book on the highest shelf of the bookcase? Well, if greatness meant being in a high position, then that book would be the greatest in the bookcase. No, Willie, to be what people call 'high up in the world' isn't to be great. To be great you must be great in yourself. And I'll tell you the secret of how to be great in yourself. It is this—learn to serve others."

"Oh," said Willie, "if *that's* all, I'll begin to serve others right away! Just tell me what I must do. Shall I give away my shilling to the monkey-boy the next time he comes round?"

"Well," said the father, "you needn't wait for the monkey-boy to begin to serve. I expect there's something you can do here and now to start you on the road of service that leads to greatness."

"Something here and now!" repeated Willie, more puzzled than ever. "Oh, Dad, please give up teasing and tell me what you really mean."

"I'm not teasing," said the father. "But, laddie, I can't tell you what is the task you must do. It is only God who can do that. Listen to His voice and do what He tells you."

"I'm listening as hard as I can," replied Willie, "and I can't hear anybody speaking but you."

"Think," said his father. "Is there not anything, even quite a small thing, that you ought to go and do?"

"We-l-l," said Willie very slowly. "There *are* the rabbits, of course. I was in such a hurry this morning that I gave them only half a breakfast. It was rather mean of me to starve them. I expect I'd better run and gather some dandelions for them at once."

"Right, my boy," said father. "That's what God has been telling you to do."

"Oh! but it's such a little thing!" cried Willie. "God couldn't possibly care whether I fed my rabbits or not. I'd like Him to set me some hard duty."

"No, Willie," said his father, "that's your mistake.

The little duty that lies straight in front of you is a great thing in God's sight. And only by doing that little duty can you learn how to be truly great."

Boys and girls, to do what God gives you to do, whether it is a big thing or a little thing, that is the way to be really great, whether it looks great or not. And you will find that some of the men whom the world calls greatest did just this. They did the duty nearest to them. They listened to God's voice of conscience in their heart, and they were surprised when they found themselves famous. But it was not the fame that made them great, it was the doing of the task that God gave them.

THE HAPPIEST HAPPINESS.

Ye shall pass over before your brethren armed . . . and shall help them; until the Lord have given your brethren rest.—Josh. i. 14, 15.

TO-DAY'S text is a Bible story which is told no fewer than three times, first in the third chapter of Deuteronomy, second in the thirty-second chapter of Numbers, third in the first chapter of Joshua. And the very end of the story you will find in the twenty-second chapter of the same book. You may never have noticed it—it is such a little story—but it is a very important story all the same, and I want to talk about it this morning.

In the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth verses of that first chapter of Joshua you will find Joshua reminding the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh of an old promise they had made to Moses. The time had come, said Joshua, for fulfilling that promise. What was it?

Some time previously the Israelites had conquered and driven out the inhabitants of the land west of Jordan. And at that time these two and a half tribes had said to Moses, "This land will suit us better than the land across the river, even although that is the Promised Land. This will suit our flocks and our herds.

May we stay and settle here?" "Yes," said Moses, "on one condition—that when it comes to the crossing of Jordan, when it comes to the time that the rest of the tribes go over to the Promised Land, you will not stay here selfishly in safety, but you will send over in the van of the army your picked fighting men; you will help your brother tribes to win *their* inheritance across the river." And the two and a half tribes solemnly promised that they would carry out this condition. They would not be selfishly content with their own good fortune. They would help the other tribes to conquer the people east of Jordan. And when that was done, and only then, they would come back to the land of their choice, and settle down happily with their wives and their children, their flocks and their herds.

Boys and girls, that old, old story reminds me of an even older story, an Indian legend, a sort of fairy tale. I shall tell it you as it was told to me.

Long ago, so long ago that there was just time before it for the "longest ago," there lived in the north of India Himālya, the king among mountains. The snowflakes crowned his forehead, and the clouds robed him in purple, and the winds were his slaves. He was the wealthiest of monarchs, for he had treasures of gold and silver, and he had caverns whose roofs were of diamonds and whose floors were studded with emeralds. But he had a treasure fairer and dearer than any of these—an only daughter, the laughing sparkling Gangā. She was so beautiful and gentle and precious—this daughter of old Himālya—that the Immortals came to earth and took her up to Heaven to live with them.

But no sooner had she left this earth than many terrible things began to happen there. The little flowers drooped and faded, the grass and the herbs withered, the people grew feeble and sickly, the cattle died of thirst, and all the land of Hindustan was like to become a desert.

Then there arose one who remembered the wisdom of Garuda, the king of birds; and he went to that most learned fowl and said, "O Garuda, how may we bring back health and happiness to this earth?" And the king of birds swayed slowly on the branch of his tree and said, "There will not be health and happiness for man or beast till Gangā shall quit the heavenly regions and descend to refresh the world."

But who could ask the beautiful Gangā to leave her heavenly home?

At last one of the Immortals, touched with the misery of mankind, climbed to the brow of old Himālya, and called to the beautiful Gangā, that queen among rivers. "O child of old Himālya, thy heavenly home is full of delights. Its light is golden yet soft, its air is heavy with perfume and thrills with the sound of music and song, and those who dwell there are happy. But, O child of old Himālya, the earth where thou once didst dwell is parched with a feverish thirst, the little flowers are withered, the gazelles find no stream to refresh them, the herons are dying, and the swans have left. Men are feeble and sickly, the earth is the dwelling-place of sorrow, the air is laden with sighs, the sound of weeping is ever in the land. Therefore, O Gangā, descend!"

Then the great heart of Gangā throbbed in her bosom. She rushed from the home of the gods crying, "I come, O belovèd! Doubly beloved for thy sorrow!"

Singing and dancing and laughing, scattering jewel-drops on either hand, she came to earth. And wherever she passed the flowers unfolded their petals, the herons revived, the gazelles came to drink, and the swans, like fluttering clouds, returned to the land. And the children of men, who had lived in despair and sickness, at the touch of her glistening waters found happiness and health.

Boys and girls, that is the legend of how the Ganges, the most glorious river of India, came to be. It is only a legend, but both it and the story of the two and a half tribes seem to me to say the same thing. They both tell us that we can never be truly happy or truly blest till we have cared for the sorrows of others and made them happy too.

A BIT OF RED CORD.

She bound the scarlet line in the window.—Josh. ii. 21.

A BIT of red cord. That was what the spies told Rahab to bind in her window. She wanted to have some pledge that the Israelites would spare her and her household when they captured Jericho. So they told her to put a red cord in her window as a sign; and they promised that when the Israelites saw it they would leave her house unharmed. Perhaps the spies were thinking of the red blood with which the Israelites sprinkled their doorposts on the night that the first-born of Egypt were slain.

Now it is rather odd, but a bit of red cord stands for quite a number of things that are protected or kept apart, just as Rahab and her household were.

I wonder how many of you try to grow sweet-peas in your garden? Well, you know how, when the young shoots are just popping their heads above ground, the birds come along and nip them off. Now, have you ever tried stretching a bit of red string or wool over the place where the peas are sown? All you have to do is to put in a little stick at each end of the row and twine the cord backwards and forwards once or twice so that it will show. You will find it a splendid protection. Somehow or other it acts like a danger signal to the birds and they won't come near it.

Then there are the thick red cords we find in old cathedrals. They are run along from seat to seat to keep the public from trespassing, and sometimes you find them roping off the chancel where the altar and choir seats are. You have seen similar red cords at weddings to mark off the seats reserved for guests, or at big public functions to indicate those set aside for people of importance.

But there are invisible as well as visible red cords. Wherever people have anything that they want specially taken care of or kept apart from common use, *there* is a bit of red cord whether you can see it or not.

Will you try to remember three things about these bits of cord?

1. *Don't put up unnecessary bits of red cord.*—You remember the old, old fable of the dog in the manger. Mr. Dog was lying comfortably in the manger on a bed of hay when along came Mr. Ox and begged for some of the hay for his dinner. But Mr. Dog got up and behaved in a most ungentlemanly fashion. He growled, and he snarled, and he wouldn't allow Mr. Ox to touch the hay! So Mr. Ox gave Mr. Dog a bit of his mind. "That's just like you," he said; "you can't eat the hay yourself, and yet you won't let anybody else have any!"

Do you like the picture of Mr. Dog? He was just putting up an unnecessary bit of red cord round that manger and it didn't look very pretty. And we do the same when we refuse to share with others what we can't use ourselves.

There is another way in which we can, and often do, put up this unnecessary red cord.

A well-known novelist in one of her novels speaks about the red cord which certain sets of people put up round them. These people are all very friendly with each other within their own set, but if you come into their company they at once make you feel the invisible red cord which separates them from you. They are like those seats at the wedding or the public function—specially reserved—and if you are outside their circle they give you the same feeling that the visible red cord does in these places—the feeling of somehow being left out in the cold.

Now I know that this invisible red cord exists even among boys and girls. I have seen three or four little girls with their arms entwined and their heads together. They were talking in low voices. And I have seen a fifth little girl join them who was either a stranger or not a particular favourite; and suddenly the conversation ceased. And I've heard one boy tell another straight—"Look here, clear out, will you? You're not wanted."

Now don't have anything to do with that kind of red cord. It isn't an ornament. By all means have your special friends, but be kind to the outsiders, and don't make them feel out of it.

2. *Respect other people's red cord.*—What do we mean by that?

Well, there was an old lady once who lived in a village. All her relatives were dead and she lived quite alone. Her one pleasure in life was her garden. All summer long it was sweet with the perfume of lilies and roses, stocks, mignonette, and carnations; and every day when the weather was fine you might have seen her tending her precious flowers—tying up a rebellious shoot here, taking out a few weeds there, watering a sickly plant somewhere else. You see, she had no children to love, so she tended the flowers instead.

Then one day they began to build a new village school opposite her cottage, and before long the school was completed and the boys and girls were occupying it.

Now these boys and girls had each a playground of their own, but many of them preferred playing on the road. And then things began to happen.

One of the games they played was "rounders," and that meant that very often their ball landed in the old lady's garden. Another game was "cat and bat" and "cats" have an awkward way of jumping where they're not meant to.

The boys and girls used to rush in at the old lady's gate to recover their belongings, and often they trampled down her borders. At first she reprimanded them mildly, but by and by she began to get angry. And when she got angry some of them only thought that funny, because of course they couldn't see into her heart and discover the pain that was there. They couldn't know that when they were trampling down her flowers they were really trampling down her children.

So at last she grew so unhappy that she gave up her cottage and went away to live elsewhere.

Now, boys and girls, don't trample on other people's flower-beds or mess up where they have tidied, or destroy the favourite books they have lent you. And don't trample on other people's feelings. There are sacred places in everybody's heart where we have no right to intrude; there are other places where we must take off our shoes and walk softly. Respect the red cord of others.

3. Last of all and most important of all, *don't forget to put a red cord round your heart,* the red cord of Jesus' love. It will keep you pure and unselfish and true. It will hold you back from doing things of which you are ashamed. It will guard you safely in all temptation.

THE MEANING OF A MONUMENT.

What mean ye by these stones?—Josh. iv. 6.

Lately we have all been hearing a great deal about monuments. Nearly every town, every village, every church, even every large school has been talking about the monument, the memorial, that it is to raise to the memory of its heroes who fell in the Great War.

When we speak of a monument we usually think of something in the way of a tall column, such as the Nelson Monument in Trafalgar Square, London; or of a building not unlike a church spire with a statue in the centre of it, such as Sir Walter Scott's Monument in Princes Street, Edinburgh. But a monument does not need to be made of stone. A monument or memorial sometimes takes the form of a stained-glass window, or a brass tablet, or an organ, or a library, or a bursary, or—but we might go on for an hour suggesting memorials!

Even stone monuments are as varied as the men who designed them. The Pyramids of Egypt, the greatest of which is 7000 years old, are monuments—the largest in the world. The Sphinx is a monument, so is the Arch of Titus in Rome, so is the Arc de Triomphe in Paris; so, too, though their meaning is an enigma, are these great stone circles which the Druids left behind them at Stonehenge and many other places in our Islands. People think that these "standing stones," as they are called, must have formed part of a Druid Temple. The men who set them up have left no record of their purpose. Nevertheless they are very real monuments to those who placed them there.

The stones of our text must have been a little like those Druid "standing stones." They were rough unhewn boulders taken from the bed of the river Jordan. Twelve men, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, each shouldered a stone and set it up near the spot where the Israelites had crossed, so that their children's children's children when they looked at these stones and asked, "What do these mean?" would be told, "These mean that God held up the waters of the river so that your forefathers might walk over dryshod."

I said that a monument is not always a stone. To-day I want to speak of two of the most beautiful monuments there are; and neither of them is a stone. Yet, looking at them, we say, "What mean these?"

The first is a road. In far-off Samoa there is a beautiful road fringed with palm-trees. It leads to a house that is famous all the world over, for it was there that Robert Louis Stevenson, the man who wrote *Treasure Island* and many other fascinating tales, passed the last years of his life.

That road was built for Stevenson by certain of the

Samoan chiefs to whom he had been kind. They had been thrown into prison for political reasons, and Stevenson had managed to get them released. When the chiefs were set free, though some of them were old, and some were sick, and the weather was unusually hot, they set to work to make with their own hands this road. It was an offering of gratitude to their friend, "Tusitala," as they called him. And at a corner of the road, they erected a notice bearing their names and reading thus:

"Remembering the great love of his highness Tusitala, and his loving care when we were in prison and sore distressed, we have prepared him an enduring present, this road which we have dug to last for ever." And at the top of the notice Stevenson put the name of the road—"THE ROAD OF THE LOVING HEART."

Don't you agree that that was a fine monument? Don't you think anyone looking at that road and reading that notice-board would say, "Here is a monument which means gratitude and love"?

The last monument I wish to speak of also means love. But it means love greater than the love those chiefs bore to their Tusitala. Yes, and more wonderful still, it means love for you and me.

What is this last splendid monument? It is the Lord's Supper. You know that on His last night on earth Jesus took bread and broke it, and gave to His disciples. He took the cup also and drank of it with them. And He told them that He was going to die for them and for the whole world, and He asked them when they met together to break bread in memory of His broken body, and to drink the cup in memory of His shed blood.

And so that monument of the Lord's Supper is seen to-day in every land and every clime. It is seen wherever those who love their Saviour meet. And if anyone asks, "What mean ye by these?" the answer is, "We mean love—the love of Christ who died for us, and the love of man for Him who died."

THE LEGEND OF ST. CHRISTOPHER.

Choose you this day whom ye will serve.—Josh. xxiv. 15.

LONG, long ago there dwelt at the court of a good king a very huge giant. He was so strong that he could take up a church and carry it on his back, and on one thing he had firmly set his mind—that he, the strongest man in the world, should serve the strongest king.

For some time he was quite content at the court, but one day a minstrel sang a song about the Devil, and the giant noticed that when the Devil's name was mentioned, the King made a sign with three fingers as if he were afraid, and that he used a charm to keep off evil. So the giant there and then left the court of the good King and set out to look for the Devil.

He had not far to travel before he found him, and he served him most faithfully and thoroughly. Up and down the country they went, burning farmsteads and destroying crops and doing all manner of mischief. One night they were together on a lonely road, plotting harm, when all of a sudden the Devil began to turn pale and to tremble, "Let us go back," said he, "for I see a Cross at yonder corner." The giant laughed contemptuously. "A Cross," quoth he, "what matter's that to thee?" Then the Devil became white with rage, and shook with passion. "What matters it?" cried he, "aye, what matters it? Know ye not that that is the sign of my greatest enemy, who has done me untold harm. He took from me the Cross, the sign of death, and turned it into a sign of victory. He stole the thief who hung upon the Cross. He broke into my kingdom and destroyed my power, and set my prisoners free. And now, wherever I go, night or day, a cross has power to bar my way. If his followers but make that sign, I am helpless."

"I cannot understand all that thou sayest," replied the giant, "for I am but dull of wit. But one thing I perceive—thou art afraid of thy enemy, and I can no longer stay with thee. I go to find that mighty King who is more powerful than thou art."

So the giant set out once more on his quest, and came at last to a wood where an old, old man worked among his bees collecting wax for the altar lights. The old man was dressed in white, and round him shone a halo, for he was none other than the Apostle John.

The giant inquired of the old man if he could give him news of the King who was mightier than the Devil; for he desired to become his bond-slave. "News can I give thee," replied the old man, "for I myself am one of his followers; but his bond-slave canst thou not be, for all his servants are free. But if thou wouldst become his servant, thou must first permit that I christen thee."

Now after he had been christened, the giant began to inquire how he might serve this King, and the Apostle told him what other men did. "Some," said he, "serve him by many prayers, and some paint holy pictures, and some carry news of their Master to foreign lands." But the giant shook his head sadly. "For none of these things am I fitted," said he, "for I am but a poor wit at the best." Then the Apostle thought again, and presently he said, "I see that thou art a great and strong man, and thou mayst use thy strength for thy King. Not far hence is a swift and fierce stream, and many travellers in attempting to ford it are swept away by the flood. If thou wouldst please thy Master, go dwell by the stream and bear the travellers across."

So the giant came to the stream and dwelt by its banks, and many a traveller did he bear across, and many a life did he save.

One dark and stormy winter's night he heard the cry of a child, and on going out from his rude hut, he saw a very small child bearing in his hand a globe. And the little one begged that he might be carried across the river. The giant thought he had a very easy task to perform. Setting the child on his shoulder, he seized the palm tree which served him for a staff and stepped down into the dark waters.

Then an extraordinary thing happened. With each step that he took his burden became heavier, until his shoulders were bowed down beneath the weight, and his staff was bent like a reed. On and on he struggled, the swelling waters now well-nigh overwhelming him, until at length, just as his strength was failing, he gained the other shore.

As his feet touched dry land, suddenly all the air was filled with the ringing of church bells. And when he looked up there was no longer any little child. In his place stood a great and glorious King who was speaking to him in tender accents. And these were his words: "I have seen all that thou hast done to serve Me, and it hath pleased Me well. From henceforth thou shalt be called Christopher, the bearer of Christ, for this night thou hast borne on thy shoulders the King on whom the world is stayed."[1]

Boys and girls, this is just a legend, but you know that although legends are first cousins to fairy tales, yet they often contain beautiful truths. And the legend of Christopher contains a great truth which concerns you and me. Like him we have to make a choice whom we will serve. Some people serve wealth, but riches take to themselves wings, and they can never satisfy all our wants. Some people serve pleasure, but pleasure vanishes away and leaves behind it a sense of unrest. Some serve self, and are of all people most miserable.

The best King to serve is the King of Love, the King who died on Calvary. He is a kind Master and a true. He will never leave you nor forsake you; and you will never weary of His service. To-day He is standing in our midst, and this is His message to every one of you—"Choose you this day whom ye will serve."

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[1] This version of the Legend of St. Christopher is adapted from the poem by R. L. Gales in *David in Heaven*.

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